



Advocacy Principles

Mission

Lowcountry Local First advances economic prosperity and local ownership through innovative and inclusive initiatives that build our community's wealth and wellbeing.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Lowcountry Local First's (LLF) Advocacy Principles are long-term directives that will be reviewed by the staff and board every 3 years. The principles will be included in the board of director's binders and reviewed annually during the onboarding process of incoming board members.

The annual Advocacy Priorities are drafted in collaboration with the organization's Advocacy & Policy Committee members and reviewed and approved by the board of directors each November.

For issues or policies defined as lobbying, the staff will take the issue to a board vote to determine whether to take a public stance. A majority of the board members will constitute a quorum. Due to the time-sensitive nature of many issues, LLF staff may conduct the board vote via email. Board members will be asked to vote within two days (48 hours) of the time the email is sent. Non-responses within that time will be considered in agreement with the staff recommendation. Any policy that falls under the Advocacy Priorities or Principles as approved by the Board of Directors will not require a board vote and staff may act on behalf of the organization.

Lead

To help Lowcountry Local First achieve its mission, long-term advocacy principles will focus on the below four core areas. LLF has the expertise and network to take a leading role in shaping policy and programming in these spaces.

These principles should serve as a lens to help vet and consider opportunities that could take staff time and attention. By keeping these principles at the forefront, Lowcountry Local First can filter out opportunities that don't align with its core mission of supporting local, equitable, and sustainable economic growth.

For this category, LLF would consider the following actions:

- Track legislation, public meetings
- Alert impacted LLF Members and / or ask all LLF members to act
- Include issue status in monthly Advocacy Updates; Highlight the issue with digital content (newsletter, blog, webinar, etc.)
- Share and discuss at Advocacy Committee meetings
- Contact and work directly with elected officials and municipal teams
- Implement targeted and grassroots advocacy strategies

1. CHAMPION & EQUIP LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

Continuously create and advocate for programs and tools that supports local, independent business growth and sustainability. This includes access to financial and knowledge capital for small business owners and reducing barriers to entry for entrepreneurs.

2. DRIVE AN INCLUSIVE LOCAL ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

Prioritize initiatives that ensure marginalized and underrepresented communities can participate fully in the local economy. Advocacy efforts include improving access to resources, mentorship, and education for minority- and women-owned businesses, and promoting anti-displacement practices and policies that protect small businesses.

3. NURTURE A SELF-RELIANT, RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMY

Develop interconnected networks that drive collaboration between local businesses and the communities they serve. This includes the creation of innovative tools that allow the sharing of resources and expertise. It also includes public awareness campaigns that shift citizen spending to local businesses, and efforts to increase municipal and anchor institution procurement from local-independent businesses.

4. ADVOCATE FOR A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AT LOCAL LEVELS

Ensure that state and local policies favor local over large, corporate businesses. This includes advocating for tax incentives, zoning regulations, and other government policies that encourage the growth of local businesses over big box chains. This also includes efforts to eliminate and avoid 'red tape' at local levels by promoting opportunities to streamline standard approval and permitting processes.

Support

The below areas are important to LLF's overall mission, but the organization does not have the resources or expertise to lead. In these cases, supporting coalitions or partnering with other organizations allows LLF to contribute while focusing leadership efforts elsewhere.

For this category, Lowcountry Local First would consider the following actions:

- Track legislation, public meetings
- Alert impacted LLF Members
- Include issue status in monthly Advocacy Updates; Highlight the issue with digital content (newsletter, blog, webinar, etc)
- Share and discuss at Advocacy Committee meetings
- Take action that supports a "Lead" Organization
- Issue action alerts to LLF Members from Lead Organization

1. ADVOCATE FOR A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN FEDERAL POLICY

Support partners and initiatives working toward a level playing field and fair competition for independent, local businesses in federal policy. This may include, but is not limited to, reining in the power of large "middlemen" corporations which: monopolize markets, extract excessive fees from local businesses, or use their market power to leverage illegal price advantages from suppliers.

2. SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES & CLIMATE CHANGE

Promoting environmental sustainability by supporting policies that encourage businesses to adopt eco-friendly practices, reduce waste, reduce carbon footprints, and promote a circular economy. Promote triple bottom line business models (People-Planet-Profit), including Benefit Corporations.

3. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing affordability and access impacts the local workforce and the ability of small businesses to attract and retain employees. LLF will join coalitions or support initiatives that advocate for affordable housing but don't lead the conversation unless it directly affects local business ecosystems.

4. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation systems and pedestrian access directly affect customer access to local businesses and employee commuting options. LLF will work with city planning efforts or transportation initiatives and advocates that promote walkability, bike paths, and public transportation improvements, which benefit local businesses.

5. LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Focusing on strengthening local agriculture by advocating for small farms, local food supply chains, and consumer education. This priority aligns with the broader goal of supporting local producers and ensuring that local food is accessible to the community.

6. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND FAIR EMPLOYMENT

Supporting the development of a skilled workforce through local training initiatives, partnerships with higher educational institutions, and advocating for fair wages and worker benefits. Fostering relationships with educational institutions to ensure local businesses have access to a well-trained and diverse workforce. Promote 'Highroad' business practices that support hiring and retention of employees.

7. HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Access to affordable healthcare is crucial for small business owners and their employees. While not leading the charge on healthcare reform, the organization could support efforts that provide affordable options for entrepreneurs and small businesses, especially those related to group health plans.

8. TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Tourism impacts the local economy, and policies affecting the tourism industry will influence foot traffic and revenue for local businesses and shape the local landscape for local citizens. Partner with tourism boards and hospitality groups to ensure local businesses benefit from tourism, without leading the tourism policy conversation.

9. CHILDCARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Affordable and accessible childcare is important for business owners, employees, and customers. Endorse broader childcare access programs or support policies related to work-life balance, especially when they benefit local business owners and employees.

10. LAND USE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Zoning laws and urban planning influence how communities develop, potentially impacting the local business ecosystem. Engage in discussions about land use, particularly if big-box stores or large developments threaten local businesses but avoid leading in urban planning efforts.

11. TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND DIGITAL EQUITY

Digital tools and internet access are critical for local businesses, especially post-pandemic, for e-commerce and online marketing. Advocate for digital literacy programs, affordable high-speed internet, and technology resources for businesses, while deferring leadership to tech or digital advocacy organizations.

For more information on LLF's advocacy lobbying policies, refer to the Internal Organizational Policy on lobbying as adopted in 2017.