

STRATEGIES FOR REQUESTING AND SECURING VIRAL HEPATITIS BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Budget advocacy is a critical tool that non-governmental organizations and communities can use to influence their political leaders to prioritize issues important in the community. Legislators make the final decisions regarding budgetary allocations, but advocacy reminds them of the issues most important to the voters who elected them to represent their interests.

Community advocates are often best suited to raise concerns and then request funding allocations to address those concerns.

SUBMIT THE REQUEST

The culmination of this entire process is the request. It should be succinct and direct, but it should also tell a story. Begin with an overarching summary, background and history regarding viral hepatitis overall and within the jurisdiction, the history of resource allocations, justifications for money being requested, anticipated outcomes and ways to ensure accountability, and a brief conclusion emphasizing the “ask” and the impact it will have.

The following observations were gathered from several jurisdictions’ recently filed budget requests that were effective in securing the funding that was desired.

- 1. Include surveillance numbers** that are directly relevant to viral hepatitis elimination within the specific jurisdiction, including any increases in prevalence or mortality. Tying these numbers to other important matters, such as HIV and substance use, is also effective.
- 2. Point to federal recommendations**, especially ones created within the last 5 years, or goals with target dates that are approaching. For example, one jurisdiction referred to American Association for Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) Guidelines and then explained that current funding levels have failed to achieve those goals. It then pointed out that if the pending budget request was approved, the chances of meeting those targets would significantly improve.
- 3. The requested amounts should be specific** and define exactly what that money will be used for (i.e., \$150,000 to be used for x). It is best to be as direct as possible while still providing the reasoning behind the requests made.

COMPONENTS OF THE FINAL REQUEST:

BE SUCCINCT!

- Background information on viral hepatitis in the jurisdiction
- The history of allocations on this issue in the jurisdiction
- The amount being requested and the rationale (The “ask”)
- Anticipated outcomes for the allocation
- Ways to ensure accountability of use of funds and achievement of outcomes
- Brief conclusion restating “the ask” and the potential impact

Achieving viral hepatitis elimination requires the ongoing commitment of financial resources to expand prevention and treatment.

4. Include a section that commits the applicant to providing periodic updates of measured progresses made in accordance with the distinct outcomes being sought should the request be approved. This section will demonstrate commitment and bolster accountability.

5. Succinctly summarize the arguments for and arguments against (pros and cons) of both the approval and the rejection of the funding request put forth. The purpose of providing this is to directly state the end results in a way that demonstrates that the approval of the request is the necessary and correct decision.

It should be noted that although the request has been submitted, communication with government agency personnel should still be maintained. Part of the relationship-building mentioned above includes informing all affected parties that the request has been submitted. Doing so displays thoughtfulness and respect, and it builds a positive track record for future advocacy.

BUDGET PROPOSAL EXAMPLES

CALIFORNIA'S END THE EPIDEMICS 2022-2023 BUDGET PROPOSALS

VOCAL-NY AND HARM REDUCTION COALITION'S HEPATITIS C 2017 STATE BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

HEP FREE NYC'S 2017-2018 HEPATITIS C BUDGET PLATFORM

COMPONENTS OF THE FINAL REQUEST

Build a budget advocacy coalition/workgroup of supporters and resources

Understand the state budget process

Identify the issue and the "asks"

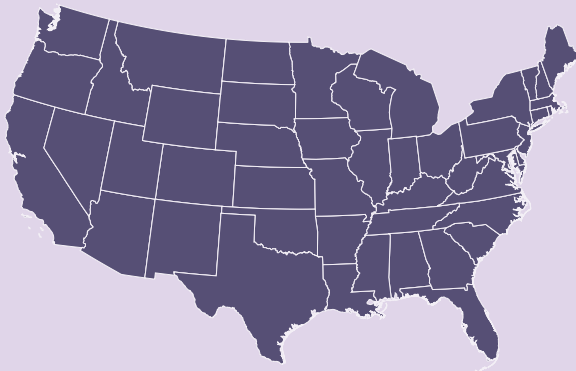
Develop an advocacy strategy to increase support

Build a budget advocacy coalition/workgroup of supporters and resources

- Engage a broad group of stakeholders to inform what to include in your request
 - Clinicians, community-based organizations, people with lived/ living experience, public health and government agency personnel, etc.
 - Recruit from the existing state-level viral hepatitis coalition, if possible
 - Collaboration with the state's viral hepatitis public health agency personnel is essential to ensure that the budget proposal aligns with the internal administrative considerations needed to create an effective proposal that the relevant agencies can feasibly implement

Understand your state's budget process

- Identify the relevant dates of the legislative process to know appropriate deadlines
- Identify and partner with a viral hepatitis elimination “champion” in the legislature who can help you navigate the process and rally support for your request
- Review previous hepatitis budget requests to get familiar with the format and content



Every state has its own legislative schedule when its political leaders are in session to introduce new laws and set the budget for the forthcoming fiscal year. The National Conference of State Legislatures [has a legislative schedule for all 50 states](#).

Each state also posts their legislative schedule highlighting key dates and deadlines. Some examples include [California](#) and [Wyoming](#).

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities offers a great resource on [State Budget Basics](#) that summarizes the key components of state budgets and the budget development process .

Identify the issue and the “asks”

- Your budget proposal must clearly outline the purpose for the request. Use the most up-to-date data and sources available to define the issue of concern and emphasize the importance and urgency for fiscal support
 - [HepVu](#), the annual [CDC Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report](#), [CDC WONDER](#), and state data reports are excellent resources for this information
- Identify specific initiatives, projects, agencies, and entities you plan to include in the budget request (the “ask”)

Advocates and community leaders play a vital role in influencing political leaders to allocate hepatitis funding in public health budgets.

Develop an advocacy strategy to increase support

- Create uniform messaging for coalition members and supporters to use to convey the proposal's objectives to the public, legislators, and all whose support you are trying to influence
- Develop resources that help educate others on the issue and your request
 - One-page fact sheets with a summary of the issue, the amount requested, and the rationale for the request
 - Social media accounts, op-eds, and town hall meetings are also great opportunities to promote your message
 - **NASTAD'S viral hepatitis advocacy toolkit** provides excellent guidance on building advocacy capacity, and offers examples to help create communications and media resources