

# Developing Your Advocacy Project

Taking up the cause for tennis is not a small commitment. For instance, having tennis courts constructed in your local public park can involve wading through levels of bureaucracy and take years to complete. However, if you believe in tennis and in all the benefits it brings to your community, your efforts will be richly rewarded. Remember to ask for help. Having friends and allies will pay off in the long run.

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY AN ISSUE OR PROJECT THAT RESONATES WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- What does your community need most?
- Is there a need for youth activities?
- Do the public schools need support?
- Are there local health issues in your area?
- Is there access to public courts? Do old courts need to be refurbished?
- What do local decision-makers care about?
- Who will be impacted by your project? Children, families, individuals?

## STEP 2: DEVELOP A CLEAR IDEA

- What do you want and why do you want it?
- Know how you will define success. What is your desired outcome?
- How does your plan positively affect the local community?
- Make sure your mission is specific and targeted.

**TIP:** You should be able to explain your idea or project in a single sentence. If you cannot, the idea is not as clear as it needs to be.

## STEP 3: DO YOUR RESEARCH

Research the local policy priorities and be prepared to show how tennis-focused programming can benefit your community as a whole. Explore the website of your local city or county government, focusing on the following:

CITY	PARKS	SCHOOLS
Government structure	Park master plans	Governing structure
Past minutes of city council meetings	Current program offerings	Past minutes of school board meetings
City council and board meeting schedules and timelines	Board contact information	School board meeting schedules and timelines
Five-year recreational facilities construction plans	Staff contact information	Five-year school facilities construction plans
	Park budget information	Athletic facilities available for students at all levels
	Proposed local bond referendums	Competitive/intramural sports and teams

Consider whether the decision-maker or decision-making body has influence over:

- Capital plans and funding
- Funding for operating expenses
- Local legislation
- Zoning regulations

#### **STEP 4: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL OBSTACLES.**

Being able to anticipate and solve issues or problems in advance will make carrying out your project easier in the future. Try to place yourself in the shoes of your potential opponents to understand their perspectives. Some things to consider are:

- Who will oppose your mission and goals, and why?
- What are potential obstacles to getting the response you want?
- What do opponents want?
- Is there a way for you to work with your opponents? Think outside the box to find common ground.



## CASE STUDY: SHAMEL PARK YOUTH TENNIS | Submitted by Coach David

### Introduction

Coach David says, “This project developed from a belief that youth tennis in this highly diverse community was limited to private clubs and affluent neighborhoods. When I approached the USPTA, I was essentially told that the USPTA primarily served private club directors of tennis. When I requested a mentor, I was assigned one who, although being very cordial, explained that USPTA does not really have a support program for the type of project I envisioned. So, I set out to expand youth tennis access with the help of a small business loan and personal funds.

### Goal

To grow youth tennis participation.

- **Project Size:** 150-200 children
- **Location:** Riverside, California
- **Community Size:** 250,000
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** SoCal Junior Tennis Development Center
- **Length of Project:** Six months
- **Budget:** \$12,000
- **Funding Source(s):** SBA Grant
- **Partnership(s):** City of Riverside Parks and Recreation

### History

“We obtained a contract to offer a program through the Riverside City Council after four years of promoting a grassroots initiative. In six months, we have registered over 250 children and established a year-round program. We also hired three additional instructors, as well as developed an instructor training system so that consistent high-level instruction can be offered. This is more youth participation in this program than in all five private club programs combined.”

### Funding

\$10,000 small business loan

Other Support/Donations: \$2,000 in personal funds

### Tips from the Pros

Be persistent and develop a program that is fun-based and children will come back! If (and only if) they have fun, they will be receptive to formal stroke instruction.

### Lesson

Build it (and fund it and make it fun) and they will come

# Advocacy in Motion Worksheet

**1. State your goal in one sentence.**

**2. Who can give you what you want?**

**3. What is the message that will get you what you want?**

**4. Who will spearhead and/or co-spearhead your efforts?**

Can this person effectively lead discussions and set agendas?

Does this person have the time to devote to this cause? If not, select a co-chair to help.

**5. Who will be your core leaders? (Select 4-6 dedicated individuals from varying organizations if possible).  
What key positions will they hold?**

**a. City/Town Relations:**

Is there an advocate for your cause who already serves on a town/city/school/college board who can keep the group updated on important meetings to attend?

What key municipal contacts will this person make?

What techniques will this person use to make contact?

**b. Communications:**

What communications tools will you use to communicate with your group and the public? Social media, email, newsletters, phone?

What will the frequency of updates be?

Who will information be sent to on a regular basis?

Will you develop a website? Will you have a social media manager?

**c. Media Relations:**

What vehicles will you use to get the media’s attention?  
Press releases, letters to the Editor, television stories, blog posts, social media?

Is there a member of the local media who is a tennis player that can serve as an ally?

**d. School Relations:**

Is there someone who already sits on a school board or PTA board that is the parent of a junior tennis player?

**e. Fundraising Coordinator:**

What methods will you use to raise funds for this effort?

Does this person have experience writing grants, or will you need a Grant Coordinator as well?

**f. Treasurer:**

If this project is not associated with a CTA, you will need someone to keep your books. Is there an accountant or CPA in your community who plays tennis?

If this project is not associated with a CTA or other nonprofit group, will you apply for nonprofit and/or 501(c)(3) status in order to accept donations and raise funds?

**g. Tennis Specialist:**

Is there someone familiar with the USTA organization that can help you obtain information and keep contact with your state or section office?

Do they feel comfortable working with municipal staff?

**6. Who will be your “lieutenants”?**

- Think in terms of group leaders who can motivate the “troops” when called to action for petitions, city council meetings, letter-writing campaigns, etc.
- Suggestions: USTA team captains, Lead Teachers, coaches, PTA liaisons, high school or college club players.

**7. Who will be your allied groups, who will have an interest in seeing your goal completed?**

- How can you convince others to help your efforts?
- What will your completed goal offer them?
- Who will engage them?

**8. Do you have opposition for any reason?**

- What can be done to win over your opponent's support?

**9. Draft a timeline for your group to get you through the next year.**

- Cite short-term goals that will move you toward your long-term goal.
- Start with your first organizational meeting and include other important meetings and/or presentations with decision-makers that will help move you forward.

