



¿Qué es el advocacy?

20 JAN 2024 · PUBLICATION

In the Third Sector world, NGOs and social enterprises, the terms "defense" and lobby are often used interchangeably, although they represent different activities. Both are crucial to driving changes and influencing public policies, but understanding their differences is key to successfully navigate the regulatory and ethical map.

Advocacy is a broad term that encompasses a range of activities aimed at influencing public perception, policies, and laws in a way that represents the values and objectives of an organization. It includes educating the public, raising awareness, and building support for a specific cause or theme. Advocacy can take many forms, including public discourse, research publication, community organization, and media campaigns. The essence of advocacy is to create a change in public opinion and foster social change.

Main characteristics of advocacy:

What's the lobby?

The lobby, on the other hand, is a more specific form of "defense." It involves direct interaction with legislators, public employees and political decision makers. The lobby can be carried out by professional lobbyists, members of the organization or even volunteers and includes activities such as meeting legislators, testifying before government committees and writing letters about specific legislative procedures.

Main characteristics of the lobby:

And the Third Sector?

For NGOs and social enterprises, it is crucial to understand the legal implications of the lobby. In many jurisdictions there is a strict regulation governing lobby activity, especially for organizations with charitable status. These organizations must navigate these rules carefully to maintain their tax-free legal regime.

In general, organizations must develop a clear strategy and train their cadres well to separate the two fields. As for the strategy, organizations must understand their objectives and know how to achieve them better, either through a broader advocacy or a lobby aimed at a specific interlocutor.

Finally, there is a definitive "cotton test" to distinguish between lobbying and advocacy from the position of the Third Sector organisations: who pays and what foundational mission is being pursued. In advocacy, it will be the organization itself that carries out an action in fulfilment of its founding mission. As for lobbying, the organization is taking care of the founding mission of a third party — often a private sector company — whose interests represent in exchange for a consideration.

Conclusion

Both advocacy and lobbying are powerful tools for NGOs and social enterprises seeking to make a change. While advocacy focuses on broader educational efforts and social change, in fulfilling their own foundational and non-profit mission, the lobby presents an approach aimed at influencing specific legislation, for profit and carried out by organizations representing third-party interests. Understanding the difference between these two activities is essential for organizations to effectively navigate existing legal requirements and maximize their impact.