



Winter 2016

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What's new:

The [Weatherhead 100 Upstart Award](#) is presented annually by the [Weatherhead School of Management](#) at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. The Upstart Award recognizes fast-growing small businesses. ACS was one of only 16 companies receiving this honor in 2015.

ACS recently racked up two impressive honors, receiving a [MarCom Platinum Award](#) in the Communication Plan category in November, and being named as a [Weatherhead 100 Upstart Winner](#) in December. The [MarCom Awards](#) are presented by the [Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals](#) in an international creative competition.

ACS was honored for its two-year strategic communication plan for PRE4CLE, Cleveland's plan to expand high-quality preschool to all children in the city. ACS was selected from a field of 6,000 entries from 34 countries.

In November, ACS President Lori McClung and Policy Associate Cassie Gaffney provided technical assistance to 14 state affiliates of the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC) as part of NAEYC's national conference in Orlando, Florida. Lori and Cassie helped early childhood advocates in these 10 battleground and early primary states gear up to implement NAEYC's [Early Ed for President](#) campaign during the 2016 election season.

Cassie also was a guest presenter for a child policy class at [Case Western Reserve University](#) in October. She led the students in a lively discussion about practical policy implementation and legislator engagement.

Start your advocacy now for 2016!

This will be an important year, as it includes a presidential election and numerous critical statewide and local races. That means more voters, weighing in on more issues, many of which will affect you and your work. To help you take advantage of this opportunity, we are sharing a number of tools to help you elevate your policy issues in the public eye during an election cycle, and sharing stories and examples from clients who have done this work well. Our best advice for the moment? **Start your 2016 electoral advocacy work NOW.**

Building Your Strategy for an Election Year

As a major election year, 2016 will be a year of opportunity for advocates of all stripes. More people vote in presidential years than at any other time, which means you have to be prepared with a clear message and strategy. Ramping up your message and swaying opinion to support your issue can mean big wins for ballot issues. An election year is a great time to raise awareness among candidates, insert your issue into the public debate, and ensure that those who are elected will become allies of the issues that are important to you and your organization.

Of course, making the most of an election cycle takes a well-planned strategy. One staple in the [ACS online advocacy toolbox](#), "[Building an Effective Electoral Strategy](#)," will help you cover all the bases. This free, downloadable guide will help you:

- Assess your own organization's capacity for election-year advocacy
- Understand the political landscape
- Build key relationships
- Create a plan of action that includes clear goals, target audiences, concise messages, and concrete next steps, while you also acknowledge your competition, budget and timeline
- Monitor and evaluate your efforts

What does an election year advocacy strategy look like in action? Check out the [National Association for the Education of Young Children's \(NAEYC\) Early Ed for President "\\$16 for 16" campaign](#). This creative strategy (designed with the help and guidance of ACS) is helping NAEYC build support and raise funds to achieve a clear advocacy objective: making investments in early childhood education—and those who provide it—part of the national conversation.

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Gearing Up for 2016 Legislative Sessions

Although the 2016 Presidential election will grab much of the headlines and focus in the coming year, practically every state in the nation will convene a state legislative session earlier in the year, and that's a perfect opportunity to engage policymakers on the issues that matter now.

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ACS Team Spotlight

Two ACS team members are in the spotlight this time around!

First, [congratulations to Cassie Gaffney](#), policy associate, who received the 2015 National Excellence in Advocacy by an Up and Coming Practitioner award at the [Professional Women in Advocacy Conference](#) in Washington, DC on November 16th. Cassie was selected from more than 100 nominees for her advocacy work with PRE4CLE and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) on early childhood education and her work with The Ohio 8 Coalition on K-12 education policy. On behalf of The Ohio 8 Coalition and PRE4CLE, Cassie logged more than 170 policymaker meetings during Ohio's 2015 biennial budget process, and also conducted advocacy and policymaker engagement trainings for more than 200 attendees from 39 states at the NAEYC 2015 Policy Forum. Through her work at ACS Cassie has earned this national honor. We are glad she is part of the ACS team!

Second, ACS is delighted to welcome [Cait Kennedy](#) as office administrator to the team. Cleveland born and raised, Cait left to attend DePaul University in Chicago, earning her undergraduate degree in Political Science, Spanish, and Latino & Latin American Studies in 2011 before following the call of the campaign trail. From the Granite State to the Golden State, Cait helped manage and support a number of local, statewide and national campaigns of women candidates and candidates of color. She returned to Cleveland in 2015 and joined ACS, where she specializes in operations and administrative management, ACS marketing and content development, client and community engagement, and meeting planning support. "I like the balance of operational work and policy," she says of her new role. "They are both skills in my wheelhouse, and it's great to use them in a way that addresses the issues I care about most."

Client Spotlight:

The Ohio 8 Coalition Highlights Recent Accomplishments

In November 2015, ACS client, [The Ohio 8 Coalition](#), released their [2015 Year-at-a-Glance](#) Infographic that highlights the accomplishments and activity of Ohio's eight city school districts. ACS assisted coalition members in developing the concept, collecting, and analyzing data that would create the biggest impact on target audiences. This year-at-a-glance document reflects The Ohio 8 Coalition's commitment to support the unique educational needs of every student in each of their districts, no matter where they came from, the amount of money their family earns, the languages they speak, or the physical or cognitive challenges they face. One significant highlight is the fact that The Ohio 8 Coalition represents 11% or nearly 200,000 of Ohio's students attending public schools. For additional highlights, see our [latest news](#) about the infographic.

The Ohio 8 Coalition is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts—Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policymakers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates, and close the achievement gap for students in Ohio's urban communities. ▲

Gearing Up for 2016 Legislative Sessions

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ACS is pleased to offer four new tools that can help you build relationships with policymakers (and 2016 candidates, too!), understand the federal budgeting processes and terms that guide federal expenditure decisions.

- [Five Rules for Policymaker Engagement](#) presents a winning formula for building long-term relationships with policymakers to further your cause.
- [Key Tips for Meeting with Policymakers](#) offers a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to planning, preparing for and conducting meaningful meetings with elected officials or their key staff.
- ACS's [Federal Budget Process](#) Guide to the gives you a behind-the-scenes look at how the federal budget is determined, and the sometimes stark contrast between theory and reality in the budget process.
- Lost in confusing federal budget terms like "continuing resolution" and "sequestration"? The [Federal Budget and Appropriation Term Glossary](#) can help you make sense of them all and give your vocabulary a boost for critical budget discussions with policymakers.

Clients like [The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) use these concepts to help them maintain relationships with state policymakers as they track and address ongoing policy issues affecting public education, like school discipline, charter schools, testing and assessments, funding, and more. The relationships they develop have been key to planning their legislative agenda and responding quickly when opportunities for advocacy arise during the legislative session.

All of these tools are available for free download from the ACS online toolbox. Don't see a tool you'd like to have or need help with implementing a tool? Let us know and we can help you get to the next step in your advocacy effort. Email Scarlett Boudier: scarlett@advocacyandcommunication.org. ▲

ACS Welcomes New Clients

Two new clients take the spotlight this quarter, with exciting projects that will leverage ACS's lobbying and communication expertise, as well as our ability to help create and advance statewide networks.

Fair Housing Coalition

Following recent legislative activity related to housing issues at Ohio's Statehouse, the [Miami Valley Fair Housing Center](#) and [Toledo Fair Housing Center](#) have enlisted ACS to help develop an advocacy strategy for an emerging statewide **Fair Housing Coalition**. ACS will help this budding group develop an advocacy strategy that will support policymaker relationship development and help them move from reactive policy responders to proactive policy informers.

Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH)

The **Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH)** is a statewide group of early childhood practitioners and advocates that works to promote social and emotional wellness for infants and young children—especially through their closest and most important relationships with parents or other caregivers. ACS will help WI-AIMH develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of the organization and the issues among policymakers, professionals and the public.

Want to learn how communication, strategy development or advocacy can move your organization forward?

Need an expert for training sessions or conference presentations?

Contact one of our team members, call toll-free at 1-877-372-0166 or visit our website at advocacyandcommunication.org

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Building Your Strategy for an Election Year

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Once your strategy is defined, the [ACS online advocacy toolbox](#) also contains a number of resources to help you engage candidates and mobilize voters to make them stalwart supporters of your issue. These tools include:

- **[Organizing a Successful Voter Registration Effort](#)**—a step-by-step guide to ensure everyone in your community can exercise their right to vote.
- **[Get Out The Vote \(GOTV\)](#)**—a complete guide for creating a plan to achieve maximum voter turnout on election day
- **[Hosting a Successful Candidate Forum](#)**—10 steps for engaging candidates in a specific discussion about your issue.
- **[Do's and Don'ts of Electoral Advocacy](#)**—a clear overview of the rules that govern the activities of 501(c)(3) organizations with regard to ballot measures, interactions with candidates, meeting with elected officials, educating voters, sharing advocacy messages, and more.

NAEYC used this suite of tools to help build the advocacy capacity of its affiliates in three states with key elections in November 2015—Wisconsin, Idaho, and South Carolina—leading up to the general elections in those states. ACS helped each state understand and deploy voter registration campaigns, get-out-the-vote efforts, candidate forums, and more in order to build awareness and support for improving opportunities for 0-5-year-olds.

In all three states, NAEYC was able to elevate the discussion and position early childhood issues as a higher priority in the minds of voters and candidates, helping to create a growing movement of support.

“Before we started working with ACS, we had zero capacity to conduct electoral advocacy activities,” says Sally McClellan, Ph.D., South Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children. “After working with ACS for just two months, we were able to identify our assets and leverage our partners around the state to begin our electoral advocacy efforts. We now have seven partners engaged in this work. The technical assistance we received from ACS helped us to build our internal capacity and attach deadlines to our work to increase our accountability. As we continue our work into 2016, our goal is that every candidate for every office is talking about young children and their families. We will be using ACS' Electoral Strategy Planning tool to build our long term strategy for electoral advocacy. ▲

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