MICHIGAN DECA

Community Outreach and Advocacy Guide for Chapters

Revised February 2022

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Michigan DECA State Executive Councils

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed for chapters to network with local businesses, organizations, and community leaders. The materials provided in this guide are intended to help you get off the ground and build a solid foundation that can help your chapter obtain support in the form on judges, fundraising, and chapter resources.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is not meant to eliminate the work involved in Public Relations or building relationships within your community, but rather intended to give you a starting point so that you know you are headed in the right direction. We recommend that you take the materials provided in this guide and tweak them accordingly so that they fit your chapter's identity. We do not recommend using our materials word for word, they should be adapted to meet your local needs.

Advocacy in DECA

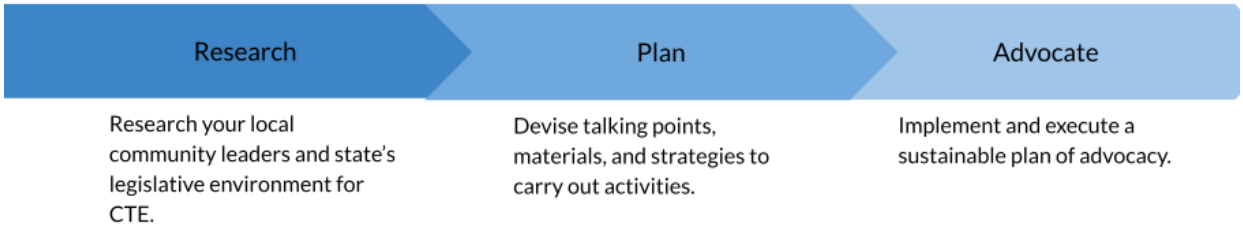
DECA, among other CTE (Career and Technical Education) organizations, relies on funding from state and federal governments to operate, as well as the participation and support of the local business community to operate. Advocacy on the chapter level has two main levels: state and local. On both levels, politicians, school board members, city counselors, and local business leaders all work together to create an environment that allows organizations like DECA to flourish. This is done through financial support, government funding, judges, and volunteers. An effective advocate will increase awareness among decision-makers at each level.

Advocacy, however, is not a one-time activity nor a string of isolated efforts. Effective advocacy is only achieved when a continued relationship is established through a repeated, steady cadence. Your aim as an advocate should be to build a scalable program, to have a plan on which future advocates can build upon. By doing this, you will be in the best position to gain support from your local leaders.

HOW TO ADVOCATE EFFECTIVELY

The Three Steps

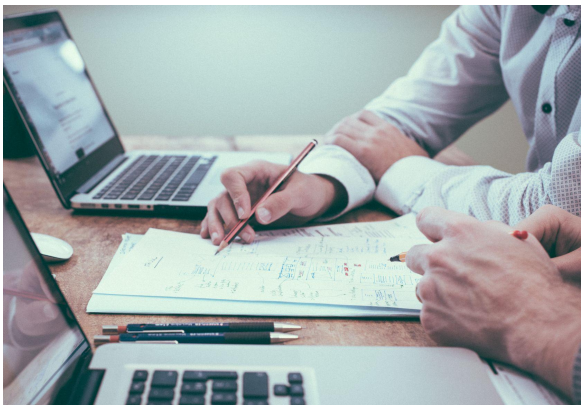
Effective community outreach and advocacy require work in three major areas:



Each of these steps is tackled in this guidebook. Each section will cover some aspects of planning, execution, and implementation so you can go straight ahead to whatever section will best help you!

Research

When researching for your advocacy efforts, it is important to first have a goal in mind. What is it you want to accomplish? Is it more professional members for your chapter? Is it to create awareness for DECA? Is it to ask for funding from state legislators and support from local leaders? Once these questions have been answered, you can then move into researching how to best meet these needs.



Some great areas of research include in local chambers of commerce, the DECA inc. website, as well as the Michigan Department of Education. Other resources you can use are your chapter advisor, state officer team, school administration, and even fellow chapter members.

Once you have familiarized yourself with DECA as an organization, you can then begin thinking about how to best carry out your advocacy efforts. Maybe that's through in-person meetings, visits to your chapter, letters, presentations, or contact via social media. The possibilities really are endless. This is where you can be creative and create a unique plan that will wow whoever you are advocating.

Planning

Having a well-thought-out plan is key in any successful task, especially advocacy. Attached you will find a sample planning template you can use, taken from the Association Officer Playbook:

DECA

ADVOCACY PLANNING

SELECT YOUR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

AUDIENCES	ACTIVITIES	ACTIONS
Who is your target audience for your DECA Advocacy efforts?	What DECA Advocacy activities can association officers do to connect with target audiences?	How can your target audience take action in support of DECA Advocacy?
School	▪ Presentation to school administrators.	▪ Start a DECA chapter at school.
Community	▪ Volunteer at local community event(s).	▪ Provide promotion and introductions to community leaders.
Public Policymakers	▪ Write to legislator. ▪ Attend CTE Legislative/Advocacy Day.	▪ Request proclamation in support of DECA.

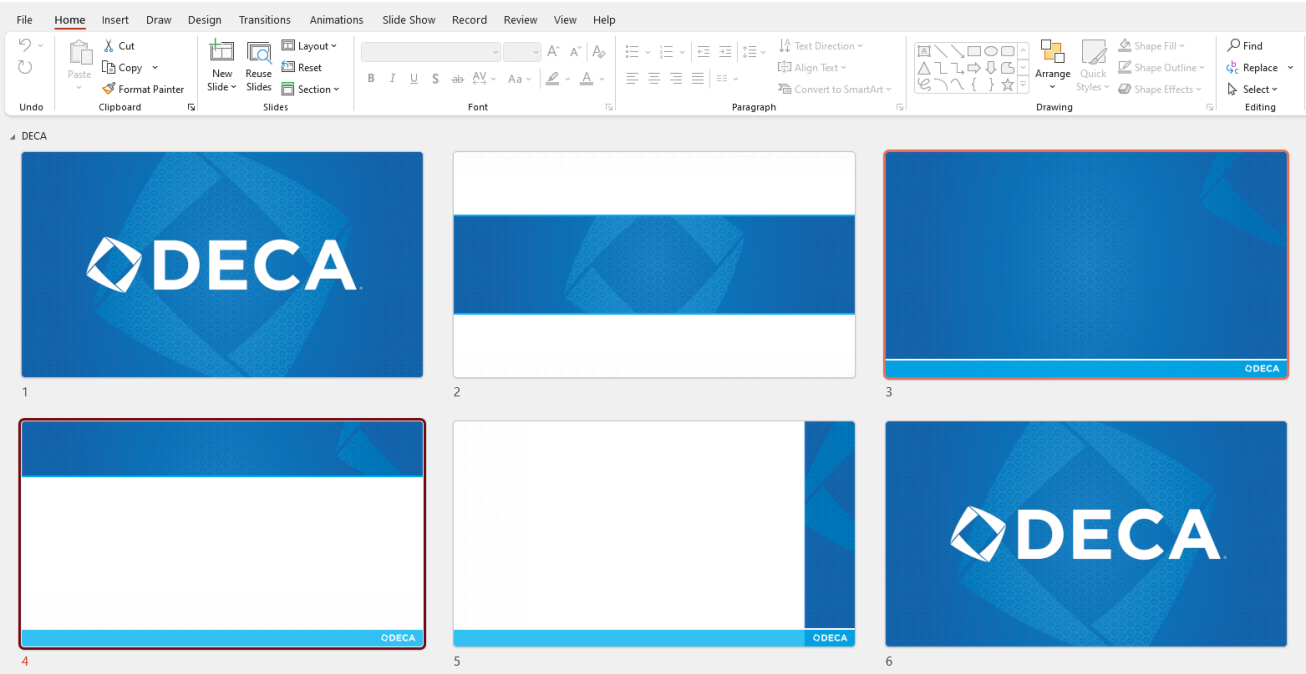
PRESENTATIONS

Overview

Having a concise presentation that answers the question, “What is DECA?” is another important piece to your public relations efforts. Clearly explaining the opportunities and benefits that DECA has for students is crucial for any community outreach. A prepared presentation can be used in front of a variety of local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, SCORE, and other service organizations. Whether you are asking for a grant or simply asking an audience to come in and spend time with your members to provide feedback on their events, a prepared presentation is a major key to success.

Template

In order to help our members to the greatest extent, we have created a presentation template to help you get started. To download our DECA presentation template (Microsoft Powerpoint), visit deca.org and navigate to “Membership Recruitment Toolkit” (*https://www.deca.org/high-school-programs/membership-high-school/recruitment-tool kit-hs/*). It is also a good idea to include chapter photos in your Powerpoint to give the presentation a personal feel and allow you to talk about your chapter’s achievements. You can also include your personal DECA story, where you discuss why you joined the organization and what kind of amazing opportunities being involved has given you.



SPONSORSHIP LETTERS

Overview

Sponsorship letters are a great way of reaching out to your community in order to raise funds. In addition, you can use this letter as a starting point to introduce your chapter to local businesses. Businesses are always looking to support youth in their community. Thus, it never hurts to ask some of these small businesses for sponsorships in order to pay for your DECA expenses. While the sponsorships may be smaller, when they are added up they can significantly lower your costs for DECA activities.

However, the business you are reaching out to will likely want some form of marketing in exchange for their sponsorship. Some ways you can give them this exposure are as followed:

1. Putting their companies logo on the back of your chapter T-Shirt
2. Contacting the local newspaper and having them do an article about your chapter's activities. Then, in the article, you can mention your sponsors.
3. If your chapter has social media accounts, you can post your sponsors on that account. Then have your members share your post so that it can gain even more exposure.
4. If your chapter has a website, you may place the company's logo on your homepage.

This is not a complete list, so if there are other ways that you think would better promote the companies that sponsor you, certainly do them. Every chapter is different and will use a different combination of sponsorship. Below, you will find a template that you can use for the initial contact as well as an index-sized card you can include asking for a donation. If you don't already have a spreadsheet of local businesses and their mailing addresses, try visiting the local chamber of commerce for a business directory or other clubs in your school that may already have one compiled.

Template

Use the templates and ideas provided on the next two pages to get started. Remember that you should tweak each letter to fit your chapter's identity and sound as genuine as possible.

{Chapter Name}
{Address}
{City, State, Zip}

{Month} {Day}, {Year}

Dear {Name of Business},

DECA is a student-led organization at our high school that gives students the opportunity to explore fields such as marketing, finance, hospitality, entrepreneurship, and management. We write business plans, give presentations, and compete in role plays that are judged by business professionals like you from a variety of industries. In addition, we attend numerous conferences each year in order to gain real-world, hands-on experience that will help us succeed in our future. DECA gives students the opportunity to travel around the nation and network with over 220,000 members worldwide. Through DECA, we are able to enhance our public speaking, leadership, and marketing abilities.

Our DECA chapter would like to ask you to support these talented students by becoming a sponsor. Unfortunately, the success that our program offers students does not come without a cost. Our members are dependent upon the support and generosity of community members like you to help keep our goals and educational opportunities alive.

We are asking your company for a donation in any amount so that we may allow these students to experience all that DECA has to offer. In exchange for your donation, we will provide an {Insert desired incentive/advertisement}. This will give your company exposure throughout the community. (Also, any donations you make are all tax-deductible. Our chapter will give you the paperwork following your donation.)

We thank you for your time and support in helping us take advantage of this unique opportunity.

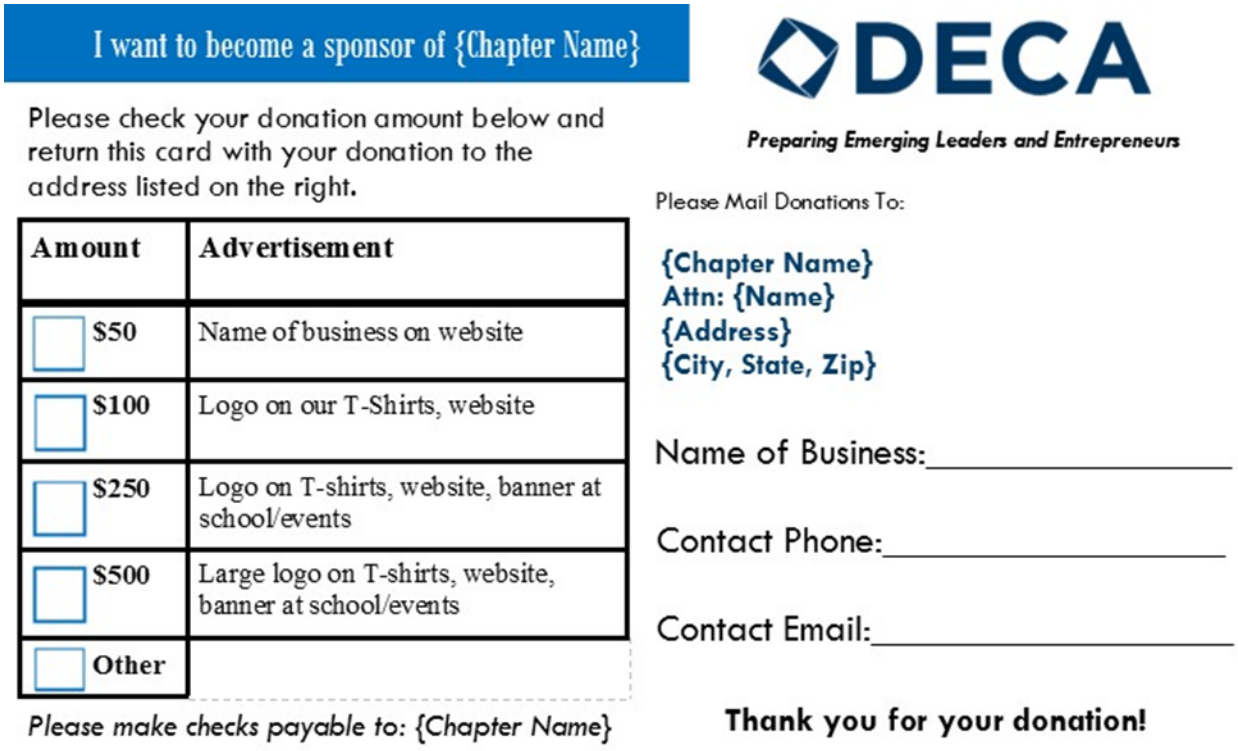
Sincerely,

{Signature}

{Member Name}
{Member Email}
{Member Phone Number}

If your chapter has the paperwork on file to make their donations tax-deductible, insert the sentence in the third paragraph with the parentheses. If not, simply remove that sentence.

Use this as an idea to create your own postcard!



I want to become a sponsor of {Chapter Name}

Please check your donation amount below and return this card with your donation to the address listed on the right.

Amount	Advertisement
☐ $50	Name of business on website
☐ $100	Logo on our T-Shirts, website
☐ $250	Logo on T-shirts, website, banner at school/events
☐ $500	Large logo on T-shirts, website, banner at school/events
☐ Other	

Please make checks payable to: {Chapter Name}

DECA

Preparing Emerging Leaders and Entrepreneurs

Please Mail Donations To:

{Chapter Name}
Attn: {Name}
{Address}
{City, State, Zip}

Name of Business:_____

Contact Phone:_____

Contact Email:_____

Thank you for your donation!

These letters can be formatted anyway your chapter chooses, but one suggestion is to include an introductory letter, donation index card, smaller return envelope pre-stamped with return address, and a pamphlet or brochure showcasing your chapter (optional).

DIGITAL MEDIA

Social Media

Social media is another excellent resource to build your and your chapter's public image. Coupled with creative new ideas, social media is an excellent tool to network with DECA members and chapters throughout the state and even the globe. On the other hand, make sure to put together a team of two to three people to help run the social media accounts. The best platforms to use are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

Tips for a successful chapter social media account:	
1	Choose an appropriate handle (ex. @MichiganDECA and @DECAinc shows your association/chapter name and that you are affiliated with DECA).
2	Include appropriate profile/cover photos (ex. chapter photo with all members or a DECA-inspired graphic, which can be easily made using https://www.canva.com/ or by utilizing the DECA inc. Chapter Recruitment Toolkit.
3	Write bio that showcases what your organization does, and be sure to include your location so it's easy for other chapters to connect if they understand you are both from the same association.
4	Post relevant material about what your chapter is up to, and be sure to use the #MIDECA and tag @MichiganDECA (ex. current fundraisers, achievements, new members, etc.).
5	Use hashtags that coincide with DECA and their activities (ex. #DECAMonth, #DECAICDC, #DECAGlass, etc.)
6	Post high-quality content, including good resolution images that make your chapter look as awesome as it is!
7	Be interactive with your chapter's members and other people from the DECA community (ex. favoriting other's photos, commenting, shouting out members, etc.)
8	Be sure to participate in the #DECAMonth Photo Challenge during November, as it is a great way to gain chapter exposure. Hundreds of chapters and members will be posting daily photos, so it is a great way to increase your outreach.
9	Try to gain local followers in order to show potential sponsors and members what your chapter is up to. Start by following them so they see your account.

Chapter Websites

Having a professional website for your chapter can boost your online image when people search for you. On your website, you can post your press releases, news articles, and information about your chapter. While this guide doesn't cover all the steps of making your website in its entirety, we recommend you try using Wix.com, Squarespace, or WordPress for a simple, cost-effective, and efficient solution.

GRANT WRITING

Overview

Applying for grants (a sum of money given by an organization) is not only an exciting and rewarding way to receive funds for your chapter, but also a great way to spread the awareness of DECA into your community. Rotary Clubs, Community Foundations, and even Youth Advisory Councils are located all across your state. Grant applications will vary depending upon the organization, but all of them allow you to discuss what DECA is and how it has and will continue to benefit the community. It is important to uphold professionalism and understand what it is that each question is asking.

Template

It is difficult to provide a complete template for writing grant applications since each application will differ, but bulleted tips are provided below to help guide your writing process.

- Learn about the organization's philosophy, the grant's criteria and purpose, and any restrictions that may prevent you from applying for that grant.
- Check the timeline for submission and the funding cycle you're applying within to ensure that you would receive the money in time for conferences.
- Create a way to show that the funds you received were successfully used (Ex. a spreadsheet showing allocated funds) to create a lasting relationship with the organization.
- If asked to come in for an interview or presentation, bring pamphlets or brochures to hand to members that include photos of your chapter.
- Be sure to always send out "Thank You" cards to each organization you receive funds from with members' signatures.

Outreach

Use the links provided below to begin your search for organizations near you that may be accepting grants.

- Rotary Clubs: *https://my.rotary.org/en/search/club-finder*
- Council of Michigan Foundations: *https://www.michiganfoundations.org/directory*
- Local Chamber of Commerce and School Board

BUSINESS RELATIONS

Overview

One of DECA's guiding principles is connecting to business. By doing this, your chapter will gain several valuable resources that will help you be successful, including funds, connections, and knowledge. There are numerous ways for your chapter to reach out to local businesses, and we have listed some important avenues below.

Identifying and Fulfilling Your Goal

When partnering with businesses professionals, it is important to ask yourself, what am I looking to get out of this partnership? Is it sponsors? Vendors? Speakers? Volunteers? Once this is established, then ask yourself, how can this partnership be mutually beneficial. These are all key components of requests to community leaders and businesses. They also include the following:

Requests to Community Leaders and Businesses:	
1	Explain the organization DECA and some common goals.
2	Explain the need or "the ask": funding, volunteers, etc.
3	Explain what their commitment would be and any return on investment.
4	Look back to your past partnership and reinforce the relationship or explain why this new partnership would be a great fit.
5	Make the direct ask and provide avenues and actions to follow-up.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP SHOULD GO BOTH WAYS! You should be an active contributing partner when working with a business. Listening to your business partner, creating mentorships, and the likeness will be what really make your chapter great advocates. Building a mutually supportive atmosphere enhances the quality of your partnership both to the business and your chapter.

Guest Speaking/Judging

Businesses can give many more valuable assets than just monetary funds. We encourage you to explore the possibility of having businessmen and women of the community join your DECA meetings to give insight into their field and be available to help with your DECA projects. We also encourage you to have these community leaders come in and act as a judge before competition season. This will allow them to ask questions about your project so you can edit and improve before your go in front of an actual DECA judge. You can reach out to these community members by:

- Sending a personal letter to local businesses asking if they would like to further connect to your DECA chapter and offer their knowledge to help improve your DECA projects.
- Send a professional email to the leaders asking for their help.
- Personally go to local businesses kindly asking to speak to the manger if he/she is available and if not, ask for he/she's contact information so you may get in touch at a later date. This method is preferred as you are more likely to get a response.

Fundraising

Building strong connections with businesses is a great gateway to establishing fundraising opportunities. Local restaurants, ice cream places, and convenience stores are great for sponsorships, but they are also great places for hosting fundraisers. In order for fundraisers to take place, effective and professional connections must be established with these businesses through professional conversations and meetings. Be sure to meet with the business owners multiple times and showcase what a great organization DECA is. Bring in flyers and your personal stories to show them how DECA prepares emerging leaders and helps with members' futures. Here are a few ways to host fundraisers with local businesses:

- Restaurants could allow a percentage of customers' bills to be donated to your chapter for a night (Ex. Which Wich Sandwiches, Chipotle, local restaurants, etc.).
- Ice cream locations could donate $1-2 dollars per ice cream sold in a single night.
- Have chapter members sell items from businesses using order forms (Ex. Krispy Kreme Donuts).
- Host a silent auction at your school and ask local businesses to donate goods and services. Start by going to businesses and asking them for products that they sell (gift cards also work). Then, set up the auction at a major community event (homecoming, festivals) so you can get many participants. Businesses will love the free exposure and helping a good cause. Be sure to showcase where each item is from.

CONCLUSION

Michigan DECA sincerely hopes that this guide provides chapters with ideas and templates to help improve their relationships with local entities. If these materials are used correctly and efficiently, a solid base will be built in your community to help your chapter receive sustainable resources for years to come.

REFERENCES

"Deca Membership Recruitment Toolkit." *DECA Inc*, 24 Aug. 2021, https://www.deca.org/high-school-programs/membership-high-school/recruitment-toolkit-hs/.

Melling, Micah. "Emerging Leader Summit." DECA Inc., *Association Officer Playbook*, 2020, pp. 145–156.

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