The Florida Legislature is a unique citizen-led body that meets for 60 days. There are 40 members of the Senate and 120 members of the House of Representatives. This year, our country was faced with an unprecedented pandemic that changed the way we interact with elected governmental entities. Although our state has slowly started to recover, we must still be prepared for the possibility of a second COVID-19 wave that might impact the upcoming legislative session.

The Florida Nonprofit Alliance has created the following 123rd Legislative Session Preparation Guide for our clients in order to help you become successful with your advocacy efforts for the upcoming legislative session.

**Advocacy, Grassroots & Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Assume in person visits are now obsolete until further notice.
- Today’s staffers are part of the digitized culture. Ask them what platforms they prefer to use because they will be responsible for scheduling “digital” meetings.
- Call-ins / Zoom-ins / TeleTown Halls will become more useful. Be organized and have a plan to educate your digital participants on each platform (i.e. know how to mute; have a moderator; have a process to ask questions).
- Every member’s actions are based on constituent/district needs. Understand why it is important for a member to meet with your client/organization.
- Prepare for gridlocks.
- Have a stakeholder engagement strategy ready. You will need allies.
- Revamp their advocacy tools.
- Tell YOUR story and Make Issues Local Again.

**Plan on Having Limited Capitol Access:**

- Have a plan of action. What happens if the Capitol closes during session?
- Understand the rules, procedural deadlines, and operation of both chambers.
- Prepare for the worst but hope for the best case scenario: normalcy.
- Prepare to make appointments and be escorted by staff/security to your appointment.
- Be aware that access might be limited within the Capitol (i.e. no loitering in the hallways, limited capacity in committee rooms, limited capacity in member’s offices, etc.)
- If fly-ins and advocacy days at the Capitol are eliminated, what other alternatives are available to ensure organizations and businesses can still meet with elected officials to discuss their priorities?

**Learn How to Build Trust**

- Are you politically involved in elections?
- Identify who are your real supporters at the capitol. Support those who philosophically align with your
• Strengthen your personal relationships with members and staff. Are you currently reaching out to them? Are you able to offer solutions to address their district’s needs?
• Do you have personal cell numbers of both members and staff? If not, what actions are you taking to obtain that information?
• Learn to communicate in clear, concise sound bites.

Be a Solutions Driver
• Identify the problem and solve it. Your solution should be written in a one-pager and verbally explained in less than 30 seconds.
• Don’t consider the opposition the enemy. Have an open line of communication with the opposition. It is easier to kill a bill than pass a bill.
• Respect Staffers. Respect Staffers. Respect Staffers. Another staffer can be all the validation you need to get a piece of legislation moving.

Tools
• Digital Advocacy: these tools will be valuable for grassroots communications.
• Research as a Tool: Identify how the information impacts the member’s district and/or the state.
• Economic and Small Business Data: Identify the impact this data has on a member’s district and/or region.
• Media: Advocacy is now a 24/7 process. Earned media is best. Social media is essential. Understand the cultural differences of each member and respect those differences.

Preparing for Session
• Now is the time to organize your legislative agenda and strategy.
• Appropriations: Funding will be limited. What do you really need?
• Regulatory Issues: Does your business want to eliminate regulations that will kick-start the state’s economy? Gather the research and prepare an economic impact study now. A district-by-district analysis will have the greatest impact.
• Solution-based Legislation: Does your business have a legislative solution that requires a change to the Florida Constitution? Start polling the state to see what value your legislative solution affords the body.

Getting Back to Normal
• COVID-19 has been hard on everyone, but it will not be a permanent situation.
• Normalcy will return once a vaccine is produced.
• The majority of staffers currently have time to work on your issues.

Visit our COVID-19 Resource page often for up-to-date information to help you stay informed of the issues related to COVID-19.