EVERY STATE, EVERY STUDENT:
Key Learnings for Statewide Efforts to Support Student Basic Needs

PART V

What's Next

As you finish prioritizing which ideas you will advance and report on, make a plan to transform these ideas from recommendations into reality.

Identify essential advocacy and implementation steps and timelines such as: securing legislative sponsors for a proposed bill, educating agency officials about the need for a specific policy change, or training faculty and staff on a new system or practice.

For example, Minnesota typically only considers appropriations requests during the first year of its two-year legislative cycle. Depending on the nature of the proposal and the legislative climate, this may mean waiting until a funding year to advance a particular piece of legislation; or building an advocacy plan that conveys the issue's urgency requires funding in an off-year. If implementing a new best practice requires faculty and staff to receive traini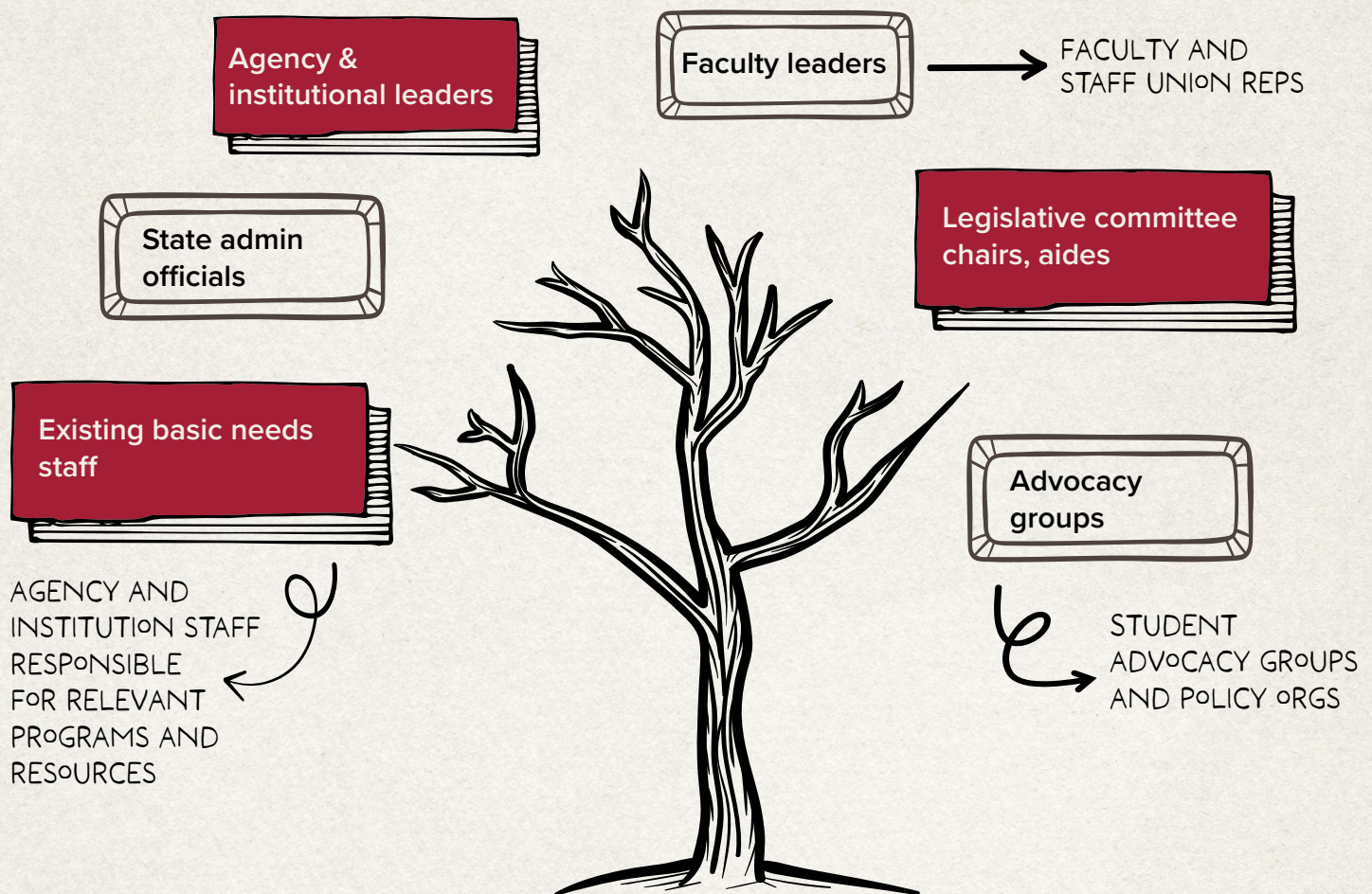ng, determine whether there are existing professional development, workshop, or retreat opportunities that can be leveraged to minimize the strain on their already crowded schedules. Amid these time-bound steps, there may be additional actions to take that lack a firm deadline or that can happen on an ongoing basis. This may include informal meetings to socialize proposals to various audiences, address questions or concerns, or flesh out specific details needed before implementation work can begin. It can also include time spent connecting to and building relationships with individuals and organizations who are new to student basic needs work or your work and may have a vital role to play in advocacy and/or implementation efforts.

Determining the "Who" For Implementation

Identifying the decision-makers, influencers, allies, and potential opposition who will be involved in advancing your proposals is equally important to determining appropriate next steps and timelines. The "who" here will depend on the overall scope of your work as well as the specifics of each proposal.

For example, establishing new campus resources is likely to require the approval of senior leadership at each institution whereas requiring a change to existing faculty or staff practice may need approval from the respective group's union or other representative organization. Meanwhile, successfully advancing a piece of legislation depends on the support of a network of supporters, from legislative staff who can get the proposal on legislators' radar and committee leaders who can shepherd the proposal through the legislative process to student organizations and advocacy groups who can help potentially reluctant or outright opposed legislators understand the need for and impact of the proposal (as well as the political costs to opposing it).

Agency & institutional leaders

Faculty leaders → FACULTY AND STAFF UNION REPS

State admin officials

Legislative committee chairs, aides

Existing basic needs staff

Advocacy groups

AGENCY AND INSTITUTION STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR RELEVANT PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

STUDENT ADVOCACY GROUPS AND POLICY ORGS

These disparate audiences are likely to have a range of motivations, priorities, and goals underlying what they support. It is vital to take time to build relationships with prospective audiences so that you can better understand their perspectives and tailor your approach accordingly.
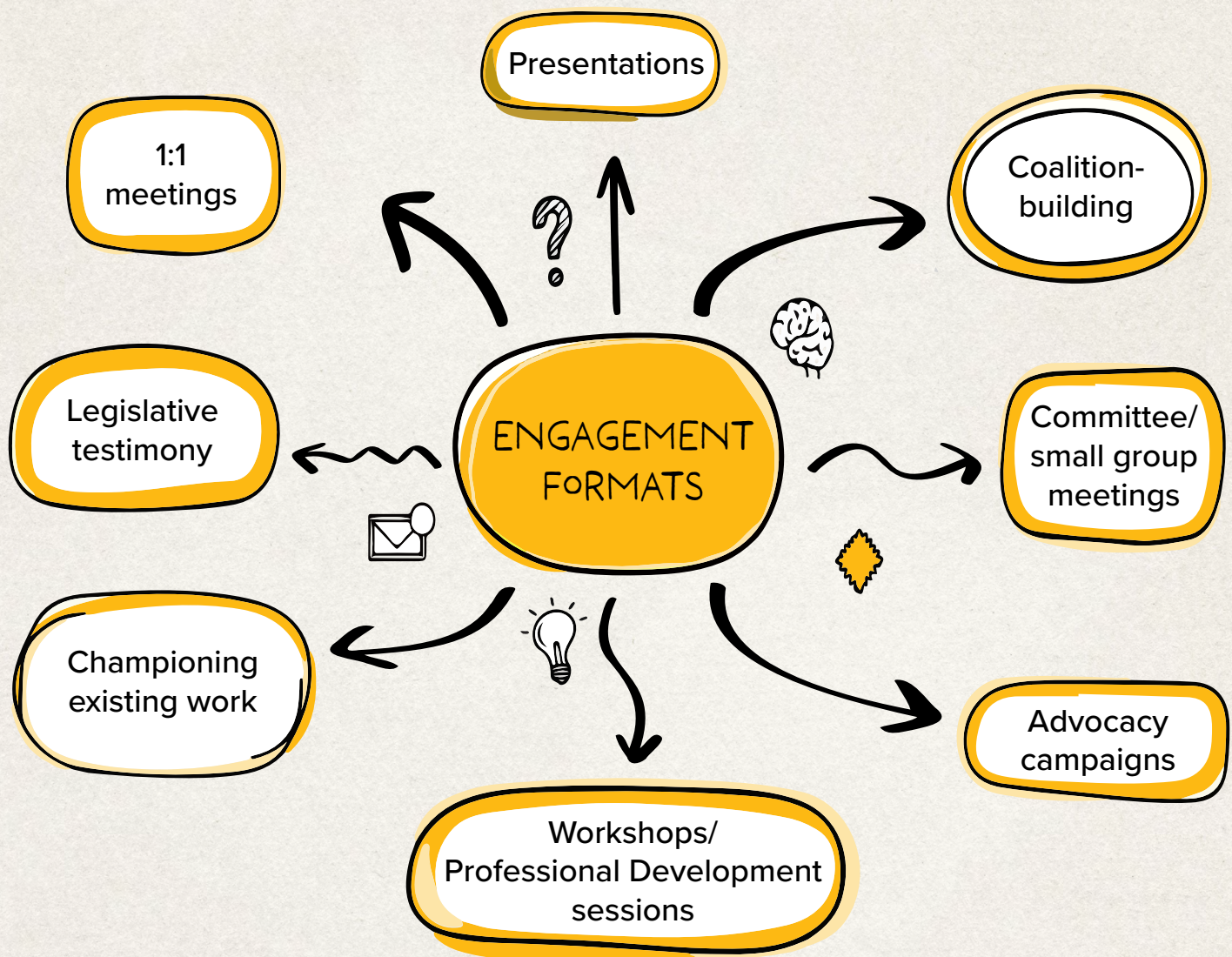
Some audiences may find individual student stories about the positive impact that a particular campus resource had on their success the most compelling argument for expanding the resource to other campuses. Other audiences may want to see data clearly demonstrating the impact a proposal will have on student enrollment, persistence, or completion. Still, others may focus on whether the proposal has successfully been implemented in other states, or the amount of money involved and the likely return on investment.

Crafting Your Engagement

Craft a message that speaks to a given audience's perspective using language that reflects their priorities and addresses their preconceptions. Beyond the message itself, consider the most effective format to capture your audience's attention. To build awareness of the recommendations in their final report, for example, Minnesota Student Basic Needs Working Group leaders distributed copies to each state legislator for review and then scheduled one-on-one follow-ups with the chairs of relevant house and senate committees to discuss specific recommendations in greater detail.

Meanwhile, coalitions in several states have sent students and other advocates to their respective capitols to conduct rallies in support of Hunger-Free Campus legislation. At colleges and universities, basic needs staff have connected with faculty and staff through dedicated professional development sessions and annual retreats to provide instruction on best practices for supporting students' basic needs. It will be beneficial to utilize a blend of approaches to communicating your message, such as following up 1:1 meetings with a small group presentation or mixing individual legislative committee testimony and large coalition advocacy campaigns.

ENGAGEMENT FORMATS

- Presentations
- 1:1 meetings
- Coalition-building
- Legislative testimony
- Committee/small group meetings
- Championing existing work
- Advocacy campaigns
- Workshops/Professional Development sessions

As you build out a plan for next steps, make sure to also create a mechanism for documenting the new relationships you develop and the existing ones you strengthen as well as the conversations, education, and advocacy you engage in their respective outcomes. These will be important both for tracking the progress of your current proposals and for establishing a foundation of effective partners and practices to draw on for future basic needs-related efforts.

Conclusion

Sustained, systemic change is needed to better support the basic needs of current and future students throughout the country. The key considerations and decision points outlined in this series will hopefully provide helpful guidance as you explore potential opportunities to engage in this work in your state. The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs stands ready to collaborate with you to create a more affordable, accessible, supportive, and equitable higher education environment. Our students—and our society—deserves nothing less.

Be in Touch!

Temple University
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The Hope Center
for Student Basic Needs