Advocacy by Western New York Environmental Alliance

I.   Preamble:

In selecting and pursuing advocacy around issues, campaigns, and organizational policy positions, there is an inherent tension between remaining flexible and responsive to arising concerns, and promoting a deliberate process for longer term planning.

 In determining a policy around advocacy the Alliance is reminded that the organization is composed of a number of member groups who individually or in combination are free to, and encouraged to, pursue advocacy around their core areas. This Alliance policy is developed only to allow for the Alliance to express positions that are congruent to the desires of the membership. In that way the member groups can leverage their combined membership. The Alliance hopes to exist as a credible voice in policy making and public opinion. Advocacy positions will allow the Alliance to enter and have a collective impact on issues important to the membership.

To address these concerns, this issue and campaign selection policy envisions a multi-pronged process for considering issues and campaigns as described below.   Though this may appear complex, establishing a clear set of guidelines will streamline decision-making and allow the Alliance to be both more nimble and more deliberate in carrying out its advocacy role.

II.   Categories & Definitions

1. Categories

The Four categories of advocacy are organized according to the amount of time available for response, where the response comes from, and the level of commitment by the Alliance.

a.   Response to request for comment

b.   Rapid Engagement

c.   Annual Platform

d.   Campaign

2. Definitions

a.   Spokesperson – the Spokesperson is the initial point of contact for all press and policy inquires for WNYEA. The Spokesperson shall be the Chair of the WNYEA Board, unless otherwise delegated or reassigned by the Board.

b.   Rapid Response Team -- the Rapid Response Team (RRT) is composed of three members including the WNYEA Board Chair and the Advocacy

Committee Chair. If there are Co-chairs of the Advocacy Committee, both shall be on the RRT, otherwise the WNYEA board will appoint the third member of the RRT.

III. Process :

1. Response or Comment

This section is by definition reactive and describes how the WNYEA will respond to requests either from the outside or a Working Group in a quick turnaround situation. Pursuant to requests for comment from media outlets (but in certain cases where immediate responses are necessary for elected officials, agencies or others), the WNYEA spokesperson shall be able to respond within one of two general categories. All such actions should be recorded in the organization's formal records with date, venue, requested, approvals and content summary.

a) Issues for which WNYEA has an established position

For questions on issues that have been included in a Rapid Engagement, Annual Agenda, Long Term Campaign (see below), or the Shared Agenda for Action or other published policy position of the Alliance, the Spokesperson is authorized to speak to those positions, referencing specific documents, policy change requests and demands as appropriate, and may also refer inquiries to appointed project leads or working group chairs spearheading WNYEA work on those issues.

b) Issues for which WNYEA has no established position

For questions on issues that have not been explicitly addressed by WNYEA, the spokesperson shall relegate their comments to reflect the core values of the organization including: environmental primacy, reliance on scientific analysis, a true and inclusive cost / benefit analysis of various scenarios, public input and transparency. These principles are well framed by the initial ***Environmental Declaration of Action.*** The Spokesperson may also refer to member organizations that may have established positions or expertise on these issues, while being clear that WNYEA is not endorsing those positions.

2. Rapid Engagement

Rapid engagement is appropriate for unanticipated situations where it is relevant and important for WNYEA to be heard. Issues may involve an environmental related disaster, a far-reaching policy or program proposal that is currently on the table, or other time-sensitive but significant triggers. It is also appropriate to respond to new developments on issues that have established WNYEA positions. All such actions should be recorded in the organization's formal records with date, venue, requested, approvals and content summary.

a. Proactively Releasing a statement based on core principles or pre-established WNYEA positions

This category is essentially the same as the Response or Comment section -- Section 1, a) & b) --, but is proactive rather than reactive. These situations can be handled by the Rapid Response Team. Requests for signing onto group comments with a short time frame can also be vetted by this Rapid Response Team within these guidelines.

b. Assembling a broader reaching strategy for time-sensitive issue

Issues, incidents and/or conditions may arise that are deemed critical or time –sensitive by a Working Group or the Board of Directors which brings the circumstance forward. Actions beyond those approved in section a) will require authorization of the full board of WNYEA. Any such recommendations should be vetted by the Advocacy Working Group prior to approval of by the board. When possible, all shorter-term issues and organizational policy positions should also be vetted by the relevant Working Group(s) prior to implementation.

3.. Annual Platform

WNYEA's Annual Platform will be based on issues submitted by the Working Groups. Annual Platforms may and often will include specific action items derived from longer-term campaigns. These proposals will come in a standardized format to be vetted by the Advocacy Working Group, which can request additional information as necessary. For those issues recommended by the Advocacy Working Group for inclusion in the Annual Platform, the Advocacy Working Group will coordinate with Working Groups to determine a WNYEA workplan. This information will be submitted to the Board of Directors for approval. If approved, the actions included in the workplan may proceed without further approval of the board, but should continue to be coordinated with the Advocacy Working Group. The WNYEA Board of Directors, pursuant to a recommendation by the associated Working Group, may appoint a point person for each platform issue to respond to more in depth, specific or technical components of the issue. However, all written statements or positions attributed to the Alliance shall be reviewed by the Rapid Response Team for congruence with both the work plan and the broader strategy of the Alliance before publication. Substantial changes to the Work Plan will require approval by the Board of Directors.

A report and evaluation will be made each year to the membership on the actions taken to implement the Annual Platform.

4 Longer-Term (Campaigns):

Long-term campaigns are driven by the Working Groups but should fit within the broader outlook and strategy of the Alliance. These can be thought of as 3-5 year (or longer) priorities where the strength of the Alliance can have substantial impact on major issues. The original strategic planning conducted by CFGB for WNYEA produced just set a set of priorities.

Campaigns will likely be project related work as well as advocacy positions.. As such, much like annual platform items, the Working Groups should submit an annual work plan to the Alliance Board of Directors that outlines the intended activities and advocacy needs/ actions within each campaign that will be attributable to or require resources of the Alliance. All advocacy needs/ actions should be vetted by the Advocacy Working Group before being voted upon by the Board of Directors. Items within an approved work plan can proceed without additional approval, however, substantial changes to or deviations from the work plan will require additional approvals from the Board.

A report and evaluation will be made each year to the membership on the actions taken to implement WNYEA Campaigns.