

The How to (basics) of Advocacy/Lobbying

Lobbying is the process through which individuals and groups articulate their interests and impress them upon government decision makers in order to influence the determination of public policy, and seek general support. It means persuading individuals or groups with decision making power to support a position or project that you feel is right/important. Lobbying is mostly used to persuade elected government, senior and program staff with power and influence, to support your community's priorities.



The How to of Advocacy/Lobbying

More simply, lobbying is telling your story to a decision-maker, through various means, with the express purpose of compelling that person or agency to do something – in support of your project/priority. It is strategic, planned and deliberate. It is a process that takes time to realize tangible results. It is grounded in the establishment and fostering of good relationships with those who have the ability to affect change.

(It is your story told by you, your board members and council.)



Step 1: Develop a Relationship with those in influence (ongoing) – (no ask at this time).

To whom do you need to advocate? And do you have a relationship with that person?

When you have no relationships:

- Make an appointment to visit your local elected representative or senior or program staff and introduce yourself and your organization (should include board members & council members).
- Invite local politicians to your events.
- Communicate with them constantly about what you are doing (i.e. by sending a copy of your newsletter, or short e-mail.)



When you have no relationships:

- Offer to support them in their work by building opportunities for them to get their messages out to constituents (i.e. by hosting a town hall meeting)
- Offer to provide them with information or other resources that may be of assistance.
- Ask your local representatives to provide your group with key introductions to others in government.
- Go to local events where you know policy influencers will be in attendance. Participate in soft networking events.



When Building on Existing Relationships:

- Cast the net widely – someone you know may know someone who knows the decision-maker you need to get to.
- Talk to former politicians – they can often be good sounding boards for your key messages.
- Create a contact plan based on portfolios, responsibilities, caucuses, cabinet committees and legislative committees.



Step 2: Know what you are lobbying for. Develop Community Priorities.

Be engaged in your community. Identify the issues/projects that you want to work on to achieve results (Have a consistent message for everyone to deliver).



Filter the above community priorities

How do your priorities fit into government programs/stated priority areas – (be seen as providing solutions to government problems).

- Is it important to the community, region or province?
- Is there broad based support?
- Is timing right to go after support?
- Can you get locals on side?
- Are you shovel ready?
- Is your expenses/planning of the project done/ready?
- Is your request realistic for your community (SWOT or PATH strategic planned)?
- Does your request meet government “flavour of the day”? Whenever possible, seize the moment.
- Do you have in place a champion and board that will run the project?



How do your priorities fit into government programs/stated priority areas – (be seen as providing solutions to government problems).

- **Restate your key issues, based on filters above.**
- **Prepare summary and strategy for each issue.**
- **Position yourself/chairperson/champion as a resource to government. Become the expert and the “go-to” body/person when it comes to your community.**



Step 3: Get Support for your Priorities/Issues/Projects

(remember step 1 (relationship building) – it is ongoing)

Educate: develop your message (one page max), and decide on how it will be disseminated. Be careful not to speak on behalf of the people, if you have not engaged them (see more on 1 Minute Elevator Pitch).

Organize: if your issue has wider impact, get all of the area/groups on side. If it is provincial versus local? Do you need local or regional or provincial support/involvement?



Step 3: Get Support for your issues/Projects

Identify potential opposition to your position and work to overcome or at least respond/be prepared for it.

Be able to demonstrate grassroots support for your project – illustrate this base in your lobby (delegation, letters, statements, video, petition, photos, etc.)

Who will be speaking on your behalf – nice if you can find a champion (who are the people in your neighbourhood). And the Reeve may need to say to the person being lobbied that Joe (or whatever their name) is representing the community on the issue and make a point of introducing them when possible.



Step 4. Present your ask.

A. The people

- target your lobbying
- research your targets, get to know what their needs are
- know the role of staff in the organization, department, or office that you are lobbying
- decide if you need or want allies
- build your base of support ahead of time
- include government Opposition – they could form the next government – helpful if you have built your profile in advance



Present your ask.

B. The approach

- in setting up the meeting, identify the purpose of the meeting, how much time you are requesting, and who you are bringing with you
- be clear and direct, convey confidence
- decide ahead of time, what you would like to get out of the meeting, be clear about your strategy
- be pragmatic and realistic
- listen well, look for indication of views and attitudes



Present your ask.

C. The information/Meeting

- be accurate
- send background information ahead of time
- identify the problem and propose solutions
- understand the arguments that will be used against you, so that you can refute them.
- leave information at the end of the meeting
- make notes of the meeting right after the session, if with a group, debrief together as soon after the meeting as possible.
- send a letter after the meeting to summarize the discussion and any action that was agreed to and indicating when follow-up contact will be made.



Step 5: Engaging Media if required.

- Don't underestimate the power of the media – can be an important component of a lobbying campaign and shape public opinion.
- manage the media/tell your story.
- Anticipate the hard questions.
- Stick to your core messages/keep answers succinct.
- Be positive – don't criticize government.
- If you have public opinion on your side, government will be more receptive.



Step 6: Assess Results

Celebrate or Modify Strategy and try again.

Remember to say thank you (personally and publicly).

Ongoing Relationship building/development.

