

How to Influence Public Policy

Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention
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Agenda

1. Assessment: questions to answer before you get started
2. Advocacy Tips
3. Working with Others
4. Using the Media

Assessment

- ▶ Who are you?
 - Individual, working with other individuals, a formal organization, a network, etc.

- ▶ What's your capacity for influencing public policy?
 - As an individual or a group, how much time, how much money, etc.

Assessment

- ▶ Is this about one policy item, or more generalized?
 - And over time, or just once?

- ▶ What's your expertise/experience?
 - And what are you lacking?

- ▶ After thinking through all this, ask yourself again if you want to make an effort.

Advocacy Tips

- ▶ Write down the outcome that you want.
- ▶ Define the issue/issues.
Is it:
 - federal, state, local
 - statutory, administrative rule, local practice
- ▶ Ascertain who the decision-makers will be.
 - be as specific as possible

Advocacy Tips

- ▶ Ascertain who the interested parties will be.
 - allies, opposition, others that *could* be influential
- ▶ Ascertain the timeframe/calendar for the decision-making.
 - Within legislative session or administrative rule process, or federal session, etc.

Advocacy Tips

- ▶ Taking that all into account, then create an advocacy plan that includes:
 - Development of key written materials
 - One-page description of the issue/problem, your position and your main arguments (this really should fit on one page)
 - Talking points
 - Direct communication with decision-makers
 - Use of allies, other messengers
 - Use of media

Advocacy Tips

- ▶ Individual stories are often the most effective.
- ▶ Know what data there is to know, but base communications on personal experience and impact.
- ▶ Know ahead of time with each communication what you're after and stay focused on that.

Advocacy Tips

- ▶ Look at your relationships with policymakers as long term relationships similar to other professional relationships.
 - continuous engagement/maintenance
 - ask for their ideas, needs, concerns
 - follow up every meeting/conversation with a written note/thank you
 - invite policymakers to your lake, or your business, etc.
 - become a trusted source of information for them

Working With Others

Collaboration can be crucial

- Different voices add volume to your message
- Your message reaches different audiences
- Can avoid perception of issue being “on the fringe”

Working With Others

Collaboration can have pitfalls

- How are your collaborators perceived by target audience?
- Will your collaborators “stay on message”?
- Who gets the credit? Should you care?
- Does the collaboration on this issue fit within the overall communications plan for your organization?

Using the Media

Tips & Rules of Thumb (in no particular order)

- Establish personal relationships when you can, before you need them
- Know what they want from you (e.g. Press release to small town newspaper vs. statewide public radio)
- Know the timing of that outlets new cycle

Using the Media

Tips & Rules of Thumb (in no particular order)

- Beware the press conference – what if no one shows up?
- Show the problem
- Make it a story, not just a litany of facts

Wisconsin Lakes Policy Resources

- ▶ Wisconsin Lakes website policy pages
 - www.wisconsinlakes.org
- ▶ eLake Newsletter
- ▶ Action Alerts
- ▶ The Landing: A Blog of Lakes & Lake Policy
- ▶ Lake Connection (print newsletter)
- ▶ Facebook

Wisconsin Lakes Policy Resources

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