

Guide to Systemic Meetings

Systemic Advocacy: What's It All About?

Lobbying is a way of making your voice heard on the issues that matter to you. It is a way to influence governments – Local/ State/ Federal, bureaucracies, policy makers, employers, trade unions and other organisations. It is providing information and educating on a particular issue to affect change or influence an outcome around this issue.

Who Do I Target?

Mapping decision makers, determining where the responsibility for the issue lies, is an important step. It is essential that you find out who is responsible for providing the win you are campaigning for otherwise you risk compromising your credibility and being overlooked or dismissed.

You not only need to know who the decision maker is; but where they sit on the issue, what influences them and who else holds influence in this issue. You should review the record of their views on the subject and map more broadly support and opposition to your issue. For many issues it will be necessary to gain an understanding of the make-up of a party, parliament or organisation. Supporters on the inside of these groups will be useful in providing leads on who you could target.

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Face to Face Meetings

Setting Up A Meeting

You should ring for an appointment in advance. Expect long lead times to get appointments with Ministers and local members. You should clearly state the reasons for the appointment so that the Minister's or member's support staff can prepare ahead of the meeting. Confirm in writing if required; inform the office of the names of everyone in the delegation and their position. Attach any material that needs to be read in advance of the meeting.

How Do I Make My Voice Heard

Preparation is the key to successful advocacy!

Be Strategic About Timing

The best time to get what you want is when the issue is being planned, not once the decision has been taken. Find out the stages a decision will have, who is involved and how approachable they are. It is harder to change decisions already in place. Not impossible, just harder.

Know What You Are Talking About

Communicate your definition of the issue, supported by up to date facts and statistics and your solutions. If relevant, have stories to share and costing prepared. You will need to sell them the benefits for their agenda, for politicians this is often their electorate. You will need to have a clear ask and a plan for what you want them to do. You may well know much more about your cause than they do, don't assume knowledge - you may need to gently educate.

Think outside the box and be prepared for unexpected questions. If you don't know an answer you can always say you will confirm and get back to them.

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Take Copies of Relevant Material

Have copies (including for staff) ready of relevant documents such as your policy, articles and reports.

Plan Structure Before Meeting

Prepare a lobbying plan so that each member of the delegation is clear about what order points will be discussed in and what is it you want to achieve and what commitment you want to get.

Decide who the main speaker of the delegation is going to be in advance. This member will do the introduction, closing summary and guide the contributions of the lobbying team. If you are attending multiple meetings why not rotate this role so everyone gets the experience.

Other Tips

- Have approx. 2-3 attendees, not too large a group
- Have a minute taker
- Dress appropriately
- Be punctual
- Make your point but do not argue
- Listen carefully to their response – it can often highlight sticking points not already identified or addressed

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At the Meeting

1. Introduce members of delegation
2. Briefly provide some details about yourself and the purpose of the meeting
3. Introduce main points that you wish to discuss
4. Discussion – keep it brief and to time; keep discussion on track
5. Handover relevant documents if appropriate
6. Be clear about what you are asking for/ or want a commitment on
7. Be flexible – it's ok if the meeting takes an unexpected turn, but feel free to remind the other party why you are there and what you want to achieve
8. At the end of the discussion, summarise and confirm any agreements
9. Thank them for their time

Post Meeting

Send a summary of the meeting, highlighting any agreements and undertakings. Follow up on any action items coming out of the meeting and ensure you carry out anything agreed to.