

Student Network Tip-Sheet

Lobbying

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is a way to gather information and request support from a decision-maker (any one who has the power to grant you what you are asking for).

Reasons to do a lobby meeting

- establish a relationship
- gather information
- gain support for specific legislation/policy/action
- create accountability (helps to make sure that your campaigning doesn't stop after a vote)

How Lobbying Can Fit into Your Campaign

Lobbying is a tactic, not a strategy. You should use it as something that strengthens and guides your campaign.

For example: You meet with the official to see where he or she stands on the issue; if it is not what you had hoped, you go back, generate massive support for your issue, and then schedule another lobbying visit. With the constituent support that you have generated, then see where he or she stands. Perhaps she or he will have changed his or her mind. Perhaps not. If not, you make a new plan to reach your goal.

Sample Lobby Meeting Agenda

1. Introduce yourself
 - Establish connection to district/community/ area of school they Represent
2. Thank Them
 - Ideally thank them for past support, be specific and reference a specific bill/vote if possible
 - At the least, thank them for meeting with you.
 - This starts the meeting off on a positive note, who doesn't like to receive praise?
3. Introduce Your Issue/Concern
 - Present your issue and why it's important, establish your arguments, though keep it to a few main points
 - Ideally, connect your argument to their values to the extent that you know them
4. Ask for their support
 - Be specific in asking them to take action—sponsor a bill, vote in a certain way, cancel a contract with Kimberly-Clark, adopt a Green Seal standard, etc.
5. Listen
 - You can learn a lot about them by listening carefully to how they respond; there may be a good reason why they can't do what you're asking of them
 - Insert anecdote about the importance of listening in a lobby visit. Remember lobbying is just as much about information gathering as it is about persuasion.
6. Respond and Restate Your Ask
 - Restate your argument, addressing concerns raised while you were listening.
 - Ask them to take action again, perhaps this is a different ask...if they won't sponsor a bill, for example, ask them if they will vote for it if it comes up.

GREENPEACE

- Make them say NO, twice. People don't like saying no, and you want to give them opportunities to say YES by changing your ask. *The key point here is not to ask the SAME questions twice, but to make a secondary ask. For example, if you're asking a Senator to sign-on to a particular bill and they say no, ask if they would vote for it if it came to the floor. There might be a very good and legitimate reason they won't co-sponsor (i.e. it could hurt their efforts to move another unrelated bill that's important to them). If you're talking to the aide and they give you the "I can't speak for the Senator" line, ask them if they will recommend the action you're asking for, then it's a questions they CAN respond to.*

7. Establish Next Steps

- Chances are, you won't get an answer in your meeting, so make a plan to follow-up. Ex. "Can I give you a call at the end of the week to see what the Representative says?"

8. Follow-up

Make sure to leave the meeting with a follow up plan and clear steps on how to move forward to reach your goal.