

Advocacy and Lobbying as Democratic functions of LGA's¹

Institutions and organizations are established to achieve predetermined objectives. Public bureaucracies for example are created as the main instruments for governments to function effectively and properly.

In these cases of Local Government Associations, these are established to attain specific purposes, one among which is to articulate the interests of the local government members. Some local government associations in several countries have long existed even before these associations provided certain services to its members. Others have first been organized but yet have effectively provided services to its members. A service provided by local government associations varies widely from insurance and procurement to consultancy, research and training services.

Under the umbrella of the EU project **Democratic Local Governance** implemented in five countries in Southeast Asia, for Local Government Associations to function as a training institutions is of course crucial in implementing this regional project.

This specific role of the local government association is essential for the success of the project and the sustainability of the same.

That is why under the "Democratic Local Governance Project" the Trainors Training which involves the LGA's a premium activity where much time and efforts were utilized.

However, one highly important function or role that local government associations can reform is advocacy and lobbying.

Advocacy as the first service function of the local government associations refers to articulating the interest of the association

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1. Many parts of this paper were extracted from a Handbook on Advocacy and Lobbying written by Dr. Gaudioso C. Sosmeña Jr. for the International Training Course for Local Government Associations in Southeast Asia sponsored by UCLG – VNG in Jakarta, Indonesia, 2006.

members including the protection of such interests and bring them to the corridors of power for resolution.

Lobbying as the second service function of the local government associations refers to both service functions are key roles of the local government associations as the mouthpiece of their local government members.

The local government associations to be able to perform these two crucial functions need to know and observe certain consideration as well as comply with specific rules.

Advocacy and Lobbying

Many, if not all, local government associations one time or another perform an advocacy function as a crucial service.

Advocacy has been defined as an act or process of advancing a cause. It is also a way of pleading for a particular crusade or movement. Supporting a local autonomy movement - or promoting the notion of political accountability is manifestations of advocacy.

Advocacy requires strong leaders who believe in their cause. Sometimes a cause is translated into an institutional banner which is the guide post of an organization in achieving its ideal goals.

Advocacy

Prerequisites of a good advocacy

1. Advocates must know who is the **CLIENT**
Who are those espousing a cause and who will benefit from the advocacy process.
2. Advocates must **CLARIFY** with the client (local government associations) the content and extent of the advocacy – one aim of clarifying is achieving a consensus.
3. Advocacy must be well-defined and there is clarity in contents and its formulation.

Packaging an “advocacy” is essential to its acceptance or marketability.

4. Advocacy must be forceful and properly supported with facts or justifications derived from research studies and evolving even from discussion of policy issues.
5. Timing of the advocacy is critical –Launching an advocacy will be optimally effective at the **right time** and with **the right leader**.

The absence of these two may not be the time to advance a cause.

Attributes of an effective advocate

1. Must visibly believe the cause that is espoused
Transparency in this regard is non-negotiable
2. Must possess credibility even more ideally must have charisma.
To have credibility is critical to the advancement of the cause.
To add charisma to credibility as attribute is a double plus.
3. Must be completely knowledgeable of the political, social and economic ramifications of the cause advocated.

This is important in arguing for the cause and allowing offensive strategy rather than to resort to defensive mechanism.

4. Must be a good communicator
Unless an advocate can speak or talk effectively, espousing or marketing a cause can become a hard sell.
5. Must have the ability or capacity to lead and mobilize popular participation in support of a cause.
What is ideal here is a leader who has good rapport and empathy with the people.

Lobbying

Lobbying is defined as conducting activities designed to influence public officials.

In the interest of LGAs, lobbying in this case will be directed to members of a legislative body (Congress, Parliament, Diet, Knesset or Assembly) whereby lawmakers will be influenced towards a desired actions or results.

Lobbying is an accepted practice in democratic governments or societies.

Both the public and private sectors lobby in legislative halls either to assure passage of the public bureaucracy and in turn the private sector promote their own commercial and industrial interests.

Individuals who lobby are either licensed or registered lobbyists, who are professionals and are usually paid for their services.

There is another type of lobbyists. These are the individuals who influence legislators to promote their cause. Because they strongly believe that their cause(s) embody the notion of common weal or they advance reforms in society, advocates lobby for legislative support.

In the case of LGAs, the lobby in their behalf will likely focus advocating and influencing legislative measures that will advance the interests of the local governments associations. The presumption in this regard, is that local government associations become lobbyists promoting their own respective agenda.

Lobbying Strategies

1. Know very well the advocacy

Like in the advocacy where a cause is very well defined, a lobbyist must be thoroughly knowledgeable of the cause that is being advocated or marketed for legislative support.

2. The Principle of the right time and the right leader still apply

Seek the support of the "right" legislator and at the "right" time.

3. Alliance building

To strengthen the lobby, building allies who espouse the same cause can create impact to legislator(s) whose action-decision, the lobbyist wants to influence.

4. Networking

A lobbyist may resort to networking with individuals and organizations who or which have interest.

The net effect of this approach is the confluence of one singular interest that can be very convincing to the legislator(s) that a specific advocacy indeed has popular support.

5. Cultural sensitivity

A lobbyist must take into account the cultural nuances that influence the success or failure of lobbying. Certain traditions and official modicum are observed in the corridors of the legislative halls. The lobbyist must be familiar with them and should strictly follow or observe such norms and practices.

6. Know the Local Government Committee

It is imperative that a lobbyist should be very knowledgeable about the standing Local Government Committee in both the lower and upper chambers of the legislature.

Be familiar with members of the Committee. Befriend most of them to establish rapport. Know their background and idiosyncrasies, as well as, their track records in legislation and even their individual prejudices.

7. Know procedures of how a legislative bill is approved

This is important in the sense that the lobbyist must know how a bill is being processed until it becomes a law. A follow through is critical in monitoring a legislative bill.

8. Compromise

Horse trading is at times resorted to in order to arrive at a compromise. A lobbyist must be ready with a bag of alternatives in this case. Alternatives are important for effective negotiations.

9. Be resolute

Most of the time advocacy and lobbying is not a one shot deal. It takes time to convince public officials or legislators the importance of an LGA's cause. A series of failures will precede before a lobbyist will finally succeed in convincing the legislators who will make required action.

However, initial failures in the process should not discourage any lobbyist. Patience is a virtue in this regard. Therefore, advocates and lobbyists should be resolute.

10. Hope and Pray

Lastly, while lobbyist is doing his best, nothing will prevent him to hope and pray that the lobby will succeed.

There are no restrictions on an individual's or an organization's advocacy activity. Generally, society and officials of American government at all levels expect to hear from fellow citizens about what is important to them as a way of understanding issues that might be addressed, goals that might be pursued, and institutions that may be created, shaped or maintained. This is how public policy is shaped.

Ten Reasons to Lobby for Your Cause²

1. You can make a difference

It takes one person to initiate change. Gerry Jensen was a single mother struggling to raise her son in Toledo, Ohio, without the help of a workable child support system. She put an add in a local newspaper to see if there were other moms who wanted to join her in working for the change. There were over time, they built the Association for Child Support Enforcement, or ACES, which has helped change child support laws not just in Ohio, but across the country. One person - a single mother - made a difference.

² http://www.independentsector.org/Nonprofit_Information_Center/TenReasonstoLobby.pdf.

2. People working together can make a difference

Families of Alzheimer's patients working together, through the Alzheimers Associations, convinced the government to invest resources into research for a cure. Other individuals formed Mother Against Drunk Driving and convinced dozens of states to toughen up their drunk driving laws. As a result, numbers of drunk driving deaths are lower. Additionally, many people find healing from tragedy by telling their stories and working to prevent it from happening to others.

3. People can change laws

Many of us think that ordinary individuals can't make a difference. It is hard to change laws and policies. But it can be done. It has been done, over and over again in our history, in the face of great obstacles. People lost their lives fighting racist "Jim Crow" laws. They won. Women didn't even have the power of the vote-as we all do today- when they started their struggle for suffrage. Our history is full of stories of people and groups that fought great odds to make great changes: child labor laws, public schools, clean air and water laws, social security. These changes weren't easy to achieve. Some took decades. They all took the active involvement-the lobbying-of people who felt something needed to be changed.

4. Lobbying is a democratic tradition

The act of telling our policy makers how to write and change our laws is at the very heart of our democratic system. It is an alternative to what has occurred in many other countries: tyranny or revolution. Lobbying has helped keep America's democracy evolving over more than two centuries.

5. Lobbying helps find real solutions

Services provided directly to people in need, such as soup kitchens, emergency health clinics, and homeless shelters, are essential. But sometimes they are not enough. Many food pantries, for example, needed new laws to enable caterers and restaurants to donate excess food so the kitchens could feed more people. Family service organizations working to place abused children into safe homes needed changes in the judicial system so kids did not have to wait years for a secure place to grow up. Through advocacy, both changes were implemented.

People thinking creatively and asking their elected officials for support can generate innovative solutions that overcome the root-cause of a problem.

6. Lobbying is easy.

Many of us think lobbying is some mysterious rite that takes years to master. It isn't. You can learn how to lobby-whom to call, when, what to say- in minutes. While there are few simple reporting rules your organization needs to follow, it isn't complicated. Countless numbers of people have learned how. Lobbying is easier and more effective when many committed people work together. One person does not have to do everything or know everything.

7. Policymakers need your expertise.

Few institutions are closer to the real problems of people than nonprofits and community groups. They see problems first-hand. They know needs. They see what works and what doesn't. They can make problems real to policymakers. They care about the problems. Their passion and perspectives need to be heard. Every professional lobbyist will tell you that personal stories are powerful tools for change. People and policymakers can learn from your story.

8. Lobbying helps people.

Some people become concerned that lobbying detract from their mission, but quiet the opposite true. Everything that goes into a lobbying campaign-the research, the strategy planning, the phone calls and visits-will help fulfill your goal wether it be finding cure for cancer, beutifying the local park, or helping some other cause that helps people. You may not personally provide a direct service, but through your advocacy work, you enable thousands of others to do so.

9. The views of local nonprofits are important.

Increasingly, the federal government has been allowing local governments to decide how to spend federal money and make more decisions than in the past. This change gives local nonprofits even more responsibility to tell local policymakers what is needed and what will work. And because more decisions

are being made locally; your lobbying can have an immediate, concrete impact on people in need.

10. Lobbying advance your cause and builds public trust.

Building public trust is essential to nonprofit organizations and lobbying helps you gain it by increasing your organization's visibility. Just as raising funds and recruiting volunteers are important to achieving your organization's mission so is lobbying. You miss out on an important opportunity to advance your cause if you don't think as much about relationships with local, state and federal government.

Local Government Associations (LGA's) are influential and strong institutions that can very well serve their local government members.

These institutions are in an ideal position to perform democratic functions such as advocacy and lobbying in behalf of their members.