MODULE 2

Business environment Advocacy

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MODULE #2
PLANNING THE ADVOCACY PROCESS
A SELF-HELP GUIDE

Welcome to the second part of this six-module self-help guide on Advocacy for Business Membership Organisations (BMOs). In this module, we are going to examine the question of planning the advocacy process so as to make it more effective. We outline the steps that need to be taken in a single advocacy campaign before discussing the overall Advocacy Plan for all the different advocacy activities in which a BMO may be involved.

Advocacy requires the following:

- a clear vision of the desired outcome
- a thorough understanding of the particular issue being addressed
- the ability to prepare evidence-based policy proposals
- the opportunity to meet with and persuade policy makers and implementers to do something differently or not to do something

Experience has shown that advocacy is most effective when it is planned systematically

Advocacy is also an art. Successful advocates are able to articulate issues in ways that inspire and motivate others to take action.

STEPS IN AN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

There are many aspects to reaching and convincing government officials about change that your BMO would like to see happen. To do this successfully for any particular policy change, it is necessary to design and implement an advocacy campaign. There are many steps involved in carrying out an advocacy campaign and each step requires its own knowledge and skills.

Step 1: Choose the issue

Advocacy begins with an issue or problem that your BMO agrees to work on, to try and bring about a policy change. The issue you choose should support your BMO's overall mission and the underlying principles that your BMO has agreed to follow. Overall, the

issue should be clear, focused and widely understood by BMO members. This subject is covered further in Module 3: Understanding the issue.

The most challenging steps in any advocacy campaign are the first two steps: choosing the advocacy issue and identifying the goals and objectives. These steps make up some of the most difficult analytic work facing an advocacy organization or network. To complete these steps successfully, you will need to do the following:

- analyze complex environments and interrelated problems
- distinguish which policy solutions might work for particular problems
- identify potential long-term results
- work out short-term objectives.

Some of the ways in which your BMO could choose issues include:

- Discussion with BMO members and others affected by the issue;
- Members poll or survey
- Organizing meetings to identify issues;
- Collection and analysis of data and research;
- Analysing the political, economic, social, and other factors that make up the business environment.

Prioritizing issues

You can prioritize issues by ranking them according to key criteria that can serve as a checklist. The main point is to determine why the issue is a problem or what harm it is causing BMO members or the private sector. The two most important criteria to use in ranking your issues would be:

1. Impact on and cost to members – as we saw above, this is often the biggest driver. It is measured in terms of both the actual cost (e.g. obtaining a licence) and the compliance costs (e.g. in increased paperwork).
2. Focus – it will be easier to advocate change if you are focused on just one or two requirements, rather than trying to take on a broad issue.
3. Salience of the issue – does it apply to significant numbers of businesses outside of your members, or outside of your sector, or indeed to significant numbers of other stakeholders?
4. Contentiousness – is it an issue where different stakeholders take a range of competing positions? If so, it may be more difficult to convey your message.
5. Supported by evidence – have you done the research to make your case? (See Module 3: Understanding the issue).
6. Political feasibility – it may be difficult or impossible for the government to deal with an issue (e.g. if it is covered by an international treaty).
7. Timeliness for policy makers - consider which issues are most timely for the Government.
8. Complexity - if you are new to advocacy, start with the issues that you regard as easier so that you can learn about dialogue and advocacy.
9. Likelihood of success – is your advocacy case achievable or winnable?

Advocacy goal:
The goal you hope to achieve over the next 3 - 5 years. The policy goal is your vision. It is also the subject of your advocacy efforts. Goals can be general.

STEP 2: DETERMINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In various settings, the terms "goal" and "objective" are used interchangeably. In some instances, an objective is broad and a goal is narrow; in others, the meanings are reversed. For our purpose, an advocacy goal is the long-term result (3–5 years) that advocates seek to achieve. Participants should envision how the policy environment will be changed as a result of their advocacy efforts. A particular organization may not be capable of achieving its goal single-handed, but the goal statement can orient and focus advocates over the long term.

Advocacy objective:
The objective is a smaller and realistic step towards the
achievement of your goal. It is usually what you hope to
achieve in the next 1-3 years. Advocacy objectives need to
be:
S – specific R - realistic
M – measurable T - timebound
A – achievable

An advocacy objective is a short-term target (1–2 years) that contributes toward the achievement of the long-term goal. A sound objective is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. These are known as the "SMART" criteria and are widely used. Often, groups will work on two or more objectives simultaneously in their efforts to achieve a single goal. It is important that an advocacy objective identify the specific policy body with the authority to make the policy decision or take the action that is desired and thus to fulfil the advocacy objective.

Advocacy objectives should include three parts:

- What Change You Want (In policy or support for an issue)
- By Whom (Person or institution)
- When

Example: "By X (2 years from now), the Y institution (name specific institution) will have established a functioning standing committee on issue Z with joint representation of the government and the affected group" (name specific advocacy issue and change desired).

How good your work is in selecting the advocacy issue and determining the goal and objectives will be very important for the success of the advocacy activities that follow. The elements above provide the foundation for an effective advocacy campaign. Without a clear, articulated issue and well-defined goal and objectives, the remaining steps of the campaign will lack focus.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

The primary target audience includes the decision makers who have the authority to bring about the desired policy change. The secondary target audience includes persons who have access to and are able to influence the primary audience—such as other policymakers, friends or relatives, the media, and religious leaders. Just as advocates need to use data to define their issues, goals, and objectives, wise advocates also collect data to identify and understand their target audiences. The group must identify individuals in a target audience and their positions and relative power base and then determine whether the various individuals support, oppose, or take a neutral position regarding the advocacy issue.

STEP 4: BUILD SUPPORT

Building a constituency to support the group's advocacy issue is critical for success. The larger the support base, the greater the chances of success. Advocates must reach out to create alliances with other BMOs, governmental organizations, networks, donors, coalitions, civic groups, professional associations, women's groups, activists, and individuals who support the issue and will work with you to achieve your advocacy goals. How do you identify potential partners? Members can attend conferences and seminars, enlist the support of the media, hold public meetings, review publications, and use the Internet. Many groups have found it helpful to develop a database containing their supporters' contact information so they can send information and advocacy materials to them.

STEP 5: DEVELOP THE MESSAGE

Advocacy messages are developed and tailored to specific target audiences to frame the issue and persuade the recipient of the message to support the group's position. There are three important questions to answer when preparing advocacy messages:

- Who are you trying to reach with the message?
- What do you want to achieve with the message?
- What do you want the recipient of the message to do as a result? (What action do you want taken?)

In addition, you should consider how pre-testing your advocacy messages can help to gather information about their effectiveness. How and with whom might you do a pre-test?

STEP 6: SELECT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Selecting the most appropriate medium for advocacy messages depends on the target audience. The choice varies for:

- reaching the general public,
- influencing decision makers,
- educating the media, or
- generating support for the issue among like-minded organizations and networks.

Some of the more common channels of communication for advocates include such tools as press kits and press releases, press conferences, fact sheets, public debates, and conferences for policymakers.

STEP 7: RAISE FUNDS

Advocacy campaigns can always benefit from outside funds and other resources. Such resources can help support the development and dissemination of materials, cover group members' travel to meet with decision makers and generate support, underwrite meetings or seminars, or absorb communication expenses. Advocates should create a fundraising strategy at the outset of the campaign to identify potential contributors of financial and other resources.

STEP 8: DEVELOP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Advocates should develop an implementation plan to guide their advocacy campaign. At a minimum, the plan should identify activities and tasks, target audiences, responsible persons/committees, the desired timeframe, expected outcomes, and needed resources.

STEP 9: COLLECT DATA (ONGOING ACTIVITY)

Data collection supports all stages of the advocacy process. Advocates should collect and analyze data to identify and select their issue, as well as develop advocacy objectives, craft messages, expand their base of support, and influence policymakers.

STEP 10: MONITOR AND EVALUATE (ONGOING ACTIVITY)

As with data collection, monitoring and evaluation occur throughout the advocacy process. Before undertaking the advocacy campaign, your BMO must determine how it will monitor the activities in its implementation plan. In addition, your organisation should decide how it will evaluate or measure results. Can the group realistically expect to bring about a change in policy, programmes, or funding as a result of its efforts? In specific terms, what will be different following the completion of the advocacy campaign? How will the group know that the situation has changed?

So far we have outlined the steps in developing a single advocacy campaign. Your BMO may be engaged in more than one advocacy campaign. In that case, you will have to plan your activities carefully, bearing in mind the separate requirements of each advocacy campaign and integrating them into the organisation's larger plan for advocacy. The following section outlines what is required for a BMO to set up an Advocacy Plan.

WHAT IS AN ADVOCACY PLAN?

An Advocacy Plan is the sum total of the BMO's advocacy efforts over a specific period of time (usually one year).

The Plan lists and describes:

- the policy issues that the BMO will address
- the objectives it has established for each
- the set of specific actions and activities to be implemented in support of each issue
- the expected outcomes for each advocacy objective
- the total expected cost of advocacy activity.

Activity 1: Advocacy Plan

The aim of this activity is to highlight key factors involved in developing an Advocacy Plan. Does your BMO have an Advocacy Plan? If so, what does it include?

- Two key sources of information in developing the Advocacy Plan are feedback from members and the BMO's own policy research.
- As each separate Advocacy campaign includes a variety of individual activities, bringing this all together into an Advocacy Plan takes great care.
- In total, the Advocacy Plan should clearly show the anticipated level of the BMO's involvement in advocacy and the expected timing of that involvement.
- An Advocacy Plan cannot be completed until the strategy and plan for each separate advocacy campaign is developed.
- A major reason for failure of BMO advocacy is the absence of an Advocacy Plan which brings together all its advocacy objectives and planned activities into a cohesive whole.

Advocacy Strategy and Objectives

- There could be many different possible objectives for each advocacy campaign, such as:
  - creating a new law;
  - eliminating an existing law;
  - amending an existing law or regulation;
  - improving enforcement of an existing law or regulation;
  - greater self-regulation.

- By 'objectives', or 'desired outcome', we mean:
  - what will change,
  - who will make the change,
  - by how much, and
  - by when.

- Objectives also include matters such as:

  - Neutralising opponents – how are opponents reasoning, why might they feel threatened? How do you reach them as people?
  - What is the least desirable outcome you are prepared to accept?

Who Will Do What?

- Establish which individuals will carry out which tasks as part of the advocacy campaign, including who will be most visible.

- Consider potential roles for:
  - Governing Board
  - Officers
  - Staff
  - Members
  - Multi-stakeholder structures such as the Public Policy Committee
  - External organisations as allies

- Too often the BMO relies on a very small number of people to lead advocacy activity. This can not only limit the campaign's effectiveness but alienate members as well.

- A campaign Work Plan can help to clarify these roles and ensure each person is playing their part.

Advocacy Tasks

- An advocacy campaign is made up of a series of tasks related to the planning and delivery of advocacy activities.

- Activities will include:

    - Research (including dialogue with members)
    - Developing and distributing written information
    - Engaging the media
    - Making telephone calls
    - Email/SMS campaigns
    - Meetings and public events both internally and externally
    - Reporting back to BMO members

- Your BMO needs to:

    - Focus the workplan on key advocacy activities that you have in mind, including how intensely and how often each will be carried out.
    - Ensure the activities are reasonably sequenced.
    - Include in the campaign workplan all key tasks needed to carry out each activity effectively.
    - Ensure the activities are properly costed.

You will need to set up a committee responsible for overseeing the Advocacy Plan, such as a ***Advocacy Committee.*** This will be responsible for the following:

- Shaping and overseeing advocacy efforts, including which issues the association will address.
- Collecting issues from members, filtering, prioritising.
- Ensuring all issues are well scoped and researched.
- Guiding development of the strategy.
- Determining which communication tools (including Position Paper) should be used to reach decision makers.
- Guiding the establishment and implementation of advocacy activities, assigning responsibilities, and monitoring progress.
- Evaluating the success of advocacy efforts (and reporting back to the PSO).
- Including individual PSO members and officers.
- Meeting regularly.
- Keeping up a good relationship with the CSO and Board.

Costing an Advocacy Campaign

An individual advocacy activity can consists of several different costs, which we call “budget line items”. It is important that all eventual costs are carefully budgeted for.

- More expensive advocacy activities typically include:
    - Field research and surveys involving BMO members and other stakeholders.
    - Public events such as workshops and conferences (these costs include hall rental, food and drink, printing and copying).
    - Intensive media campaign
    - Glossy publications

- Less expensive activities typically include:
    - Internal BMO meetings
    - Desk research
    - Developing and distributing written information
    - Telephone calls
    - Internet
    - Email/SMS campaigns
    - 1 on 1 meetings with stakeholders

Activity	Typical costs
Research involving stakeholders	Personnel, travel, accommodation, telephone, internet, supplies
Public events	Hall rental, food and drink, printing and copying, banner, telephone, accommodation
Desk research	Personnel, internet, telephone
Developing and distributing written information	Personnel, travel, internet, telephone, printing and copying, possibly design & layout
Reaching decision makers	Telephone, internet (email, sms)
Meetings	Telephone, internet, transport, materials, refreshments
Media (combination of TV, radio & newspaper)	Coverage/space costs, direct payments, travel allowance, printing and copying, food and drink
Posters and other visuals	Design & layout, printing

FUND RAISING FOR ADVOCACY

A BMO may obtain financial support from an external party, such as a foundation, a donor, to help fund advocacy activity. The steps to take in this process are:

- Identify potential funders and their priorities, as well as understand how they decide on projects to support.
- Show credibility through good financial records and procedures.
- Cultivate the relationship with the funder through information provision and regular/accurate reporting.

You can attract the interest of external funders by:

- Having a clear statement of the project's rationale. (Why is the project necessary, who will benefit?).
- Showing how the project will tangibly impact your members and the economy.
- Creating a sense of importance and urgency.
  Showing the funder how your project fits with their mission, goals and priorities.
- Showing how your project is innovative both in design and delivery.
- Providing realistic and detailed work plans, budgets and timescales.
- Showing clearly the contributions your BMO will make.
- Showing how the impact of your project will be sustained.
- Developing your proposal together with other organisations.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR ADVOCACY TARGETED FUND RAISING FOR BMOS

- Principle 1: Define the Fundraising Goal
- Principle 2: Develop a Budget and Strategy
- Principle 3: Communicate and Involve!
- Principle 4: Be Accountable
- Principle 5: Hit the ground RUNNING...

Let us take a closer look...

PRINCIPLE 1 – DEFINE THE FUNDRAISING GOAL

- To raise funds for an advocacy cause, you have to make a case.
    - Why is it necessary, who will it affect and benefit.
    - Analyse the situation using facts generated from research, interviews and consultations.

- Funders will ONLY invest in causes that make a well-conceived case for support and include clear goals and measurable outcomes.

PRINCIPLE 2 – DEVELOP A BUDGET AND STRATEGY

- Is there a PLAN? Develop one with details of activities, timelines and responsibilities.

- There are various forms of fundraising ranging from proposal writing to soliciting contributions from members. The type of fundraising activities selected will depend on your cause and how structured your organization is.

- Develop a detailed budget itemizing line items and associated costs. For instance, research will involve consultancy and field costs. Be specific and clear on the target/s.

- There are three strategising laws for fundraising….

- Identify connections (this involves stakeholder mapping – see Module 4: Audience and stakeholder analysis).
    - Who are the stakeholders? Identifying stakeholder expectations will inform how best to involve them.

- Define incentives (information that will stir interest and commitment).
    - In the case of donors how does the cause align with their strategic goal and mission?
    - For business members, how would they lose or benefit from the cause?

- With the information from the above two points, cultivate the relationship with the funder (provide information, personalize outreach, and so on).

PRINCIPLE 3 – COMMUNICATE AND INVOLVE!

- Members are key stakeholders! Consult with them to validate the CASE.

- The ability to personalize the 'validated case' increases its chances of success. This can be done using publicity, media campaigns, developing audio-visuals, and the like.

- Develop a communication plan that allows regular feedback on progress.

- Be aware that you are strictly answerable to all stakeholders:

  - members
  - donors
  - beneficiaries
  - management

PRINCIPLE 4 – BE ACCOUNTABLE

- Demonstrating accountability is critical to effective fundraising.

- Most donors are curious about your financial management history.

- A good test of accountability is how you have managed internally generated funds and what systems are in place for financial reporting and reconciliation.

  - Does your organization keep records of expenses and income?
  - What system is in place for authorization of expenses, approval of budgets and reconciliation?
  - Is there a tradition of auditing the organization's accounts? Are audit reports published?
  - How are financial decisions taken? Always be aware that people will ask about the money.

- Your BMO must ensure that all fundraising transactions, accounting and reporting information are accurate and unambiguous.
- Efficiency: Being able to demonstrate clear value for money is critical to fundraising.
- How cost-effective have past interventions and advocacy programs been?
- Are there demonstrable results that justify the funds expended?

PRINCIPLE 5 – HIT THE GROUND RUNNING...

- Execute your strategy.
- Be flexible and realistic.
- Don't be constrained by tunnel vision - keep an eye open for non-monetary fundraising opportunities. See these as strategic partnerships with other organizations which will bring skills, access to policy/decision makers, leverage a research institution, the media, and so on to your BMO.
- Coalitions are non-monetary alliances that pool skills, access to decision makers, visibility and leverage.

FOLLOW UP

What do we mean by "Follow Up"?

- Your BMO's involvement does not end when a reform is agreed to by government
- Your BMO must also ensure the reform is:
    - pushed completely through the decision making process; and
    - effectively implemented.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- To a certain degree, your BMO loses control at this stage but it must still be of service to decision makers by:
    - Providing clear written information about the reform, its intended impact and implementation plan.
    - Participating in public hearings in Parliament.
    - Offering decision makers the opportunity to meet your members to discuss the issue.
    - Making joint presentations about the reform with public officials.
- It is at this stage that your BMO's investment in stakeholder analysis and relationship building will bear the most fruit.

"Effective implementation" means...

- There is clarity about what the reform is and what people need to do to comply.
- There is a high level of compliance by the private sector and other stakeholders affected.
- The reform's intended impact is achieved, ideally with tangible economic benefits.

THE ROLE OF THE BMO IN IMPLEMENTING REFORM

- Every BMO policy proposal should include an implementation plan – this can be very useful once Government makes a decision on the reform.
- Provide information to public sector officials responsible for implementation.
- Establish feedback mechanisms to ensure that those affected by the reform understand it and that it is being enforced consistently.
- BMOs can obtain feedback from members about how the reform is working in practice.
- It can also discuss the issue with other BMOs to gauge the reform's impact.
- A BMO and its members should be able to participate in the reform's formal assessment.
- A BMO's relationship building with Government needs to begin long before any reform is addressed.

KEEPING THE BMO MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP INFORMED

- Your members should be kept informed of all advocacy activities of your BMO.
- What are some ways in which to do this? Consider using existing BMO communication tools ***(see Module 6: Advocating – Using Different Tools for Different Purposes).***
- It is a good idea to formally evaluate and discuss advocacy activities at the AGM or even more frequently.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKING

When it comes to policy making, good decisions require transparent consultations. This means that Government needs to do a number of things well. BMOs, on the other hand, need to be ready to participate as effective partners in dialogue.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT BEST PRACTICE IN CONSULTATION?

Government consults effectively by….

- Looking closely at affected stakeholders' level of influence on the policy and level of support for it
- Using a variety of methods to obtain stakeholder input
- Consulting over a reasonable time period
- Obtaining useful and value-adding feedback
- Organising successful multi-stakeholder events
- Developing written materials to explain policy and ensure input
- Using media to reach citizens/general public
- Evaluating the feedback received
- Reporting back to stakeholders about how their inputs affected the policy's contents
- Sharing this consultation experience with Government colleagues
- Replicating this approach over time

Government Should Use Different Consultation Methods

- Formal public events – town hall, workshops, road shows
- Written input
- Focus Groups with particularly influential groups
- Informal meetings with key individuals
- Surveys/questionnaires
- Internet/Web site, email, sms
- Telephone/hotline

BMOs are an important consultation partner:

- BMOs should insist on an open and transparent consultation process for each reform proposed.

The private sector's biggest contribution to dialogue is its skill at scoping, analyzing, prioritizing and presenting issues.

This means:

- A clear presentation of the problem and harm being caused
- A presentation of various options to address the problem
- Understanding of the likely impacts of their recommendations
- An Implementation plan including sequencing and timeline of activities and responsibilities allocated

FACILITATOR'S GUIDELINES

ACTIVITY 1: ADVOCACY PLAN

Objective: To review the key features necessary to develop a BMO's Advocacy Plan.

1. **Emphasise** to participants that the most important document guiding a BMO's advocacy activity is the Advocacy Plan. Without it, it becomes nearly impossible for the BMO to properly plan and manage its advocacy activities.
2. **Ask** for feedback from participants – do any of them have an Advocacy Plan? Ask for details about what it is and what is included.
3. Explain what an Advocacy Plan is and what it includes by emphasising the following:
   - The Plan lists and describes the policy issues that the BMO will address.
   - The Plan includes the objectives for each issue and the expected outcomes for each by the end of the time period.
   - The Plan includes the set of specific actions and activities to be implemented in support of each issue.
   - The Plan includes the total expected cost of the BMO's advocacy activity.
4. **Remind** participants that feedback from members, plus the BMO's own policy research, are two key sources of information in developing the Advocacy Plan.
5. **Emphasise** that as each separate Advocacy campaign includes a variety of individual activities, bringing this all together into an Advocacy Plan takes great care. **The key point to highlight is** that an Advocacy Plan cannot be completed until the strategy and plan for each separate advocacy campaign is developed. The BMO has to bring all of the individual campaigns together into the broader Advocacy Plan for the organization. When doing this, the BMO should ask itself:

   - Is the total number of reform issues we will tackle manageable?
   - Where will we spend most of our time and effort? Do we have an activity plan in place that will allow us to manage the sequence of activities effectively?

6. To understand the breakdown of activities overall, the **BMO** will need to take full account of individual advocacy activities. **Point out** that many BMOs underestimate the range of activities that an individual advocacy activity typically involves and it is here where they can get into trouble. **The other point to emphasise** is that there may be several people within a BMO that need to be engaged in an advocacy campaign. If all the effort is to fall on a single individual all the time, it is likely to cause problems. Tell participants that the BMO's Advocacy or Public Policy Committee plays an important co-ordinating role. A key responsibility of such a Committee is to decide on the various tasks to be carried out and to allocate responsibilities for their implementation.

7. **Tell** participants that the issue of advocacy campaign costs is critical. **Say** that certain activities typically cost more than others. While the more expensive activities may be important strategically, the BMO has to weigh up their strategic value against the costs of implementing these activities.

8. **Obtain** final feedback from participants, including their experience with implementing or carrying out advocacy activities. Ask participants about any challenges they came across that were to do with carrying out activities and costing.