



Advocacy: talk about libraries and influence the political process

This package has been prepared and produced by the:

Advocacy Committee, Library Association of Alberta
80 Baker Cres. NW, Calgary, AB. T2L 1R4
Phone (403) 284-5818 FAX (403) 282-6646
Email: christine.sheppard@shaw.ca
www.laa.ca

Alberta Library Trustees Association
6-24, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square. Edmonton, AB. T5J 2V5
Phone (780) 481 1725 FAX (780) 435 1445
Email: admin@librarytrustees.ab.ca
www.librarytrustees.ab.ca

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STATEMENT OF INTENT

This guide is intended to support advocacy and lobbying efforts within the Alberta library community. The guide is intended to be used by anyone with an interest in advocating or lobbying on behalf of libraries.

WHY A GUIDE FOR ALBERTA?

Other library associations and support organizations have created excellent advocacy tools which should be consulted as part of your advocacy efforts. Links to those resources are found at the end of this document.

Part of a successful advocacy and lobbying program is in understanding the environment in which you operate. As a member of the Alberta library community, you can play an important role by working to ensure key decision makers and influencers are well informed about libraries.

In Canada libraries are a provincial responsibility. Each province has developed its own funding and governance, therefore each province is unique.

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STRUCTURE OF LIBRARIES IN THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

The Alberta Library

www.thealbertalibrary.ab.ca

The Alberta Library (TAL) is a province-wide library consortium that works with its members to promote universal, barrier-free access to the materials and resources in Alberta's diverse libraries. TAL's membership includes public, university, college, technical institute and special libraries. Together these organizations collaborate to promote and facilitate resource sharing, continuing education, and library advocacy.

Alberta's Library Systems

Regional library systems are created by legal agreements between municipalities which choose to cooperate. These form part of a province wide network of 7 regional systems and 2 large urban systems. The systems cooperate to assist resource sharing among all libraries in Alberta.

Chinook Arch Regional Library System

www.chinookarch.ab.ca

Marigold Library System

www.marigold.ab.ca

Northern Lights Library System

www.nlls.ab.ca

Parkland Regional System

www.prl.ab.ca

Peace Library System

www.peacelibrarysystem.ab.ca

Shortgrass Library System

www.shortgrass-lib.ab.ca

Yellowhead Regional Library

www.yrl.ab.ca

Calgary Public Library

calgarypubliclibrary.com

Edmonton Public Library

www.epl.ca

Public Library Services Branch

www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca

The Public Library Services Branch within Alberta Municipal Affairs provides operating grants to public libraries and regional library systems. The Branch facilitates growth and development of library and information service and monitors library legislation.

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

www.advancededandtech.alberta.ca

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, along with its boards and councils, works with post-secondary institutions to ensure all Albertans have access to high quality learning opportunities.

PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING

Alberta Municipal Affairs provides a grant program to support the delivery of public library service.

The program provides annual operating grants to 226 municipal and community library boards and 7 library system boards established under the Libraries Act of Alberta. In addition to annual operating grants, the Ministry provides, funding for the Alberta Public Library Electronic Network (APLEN), support for SuperNet connectivity, project grants and establishment grants.

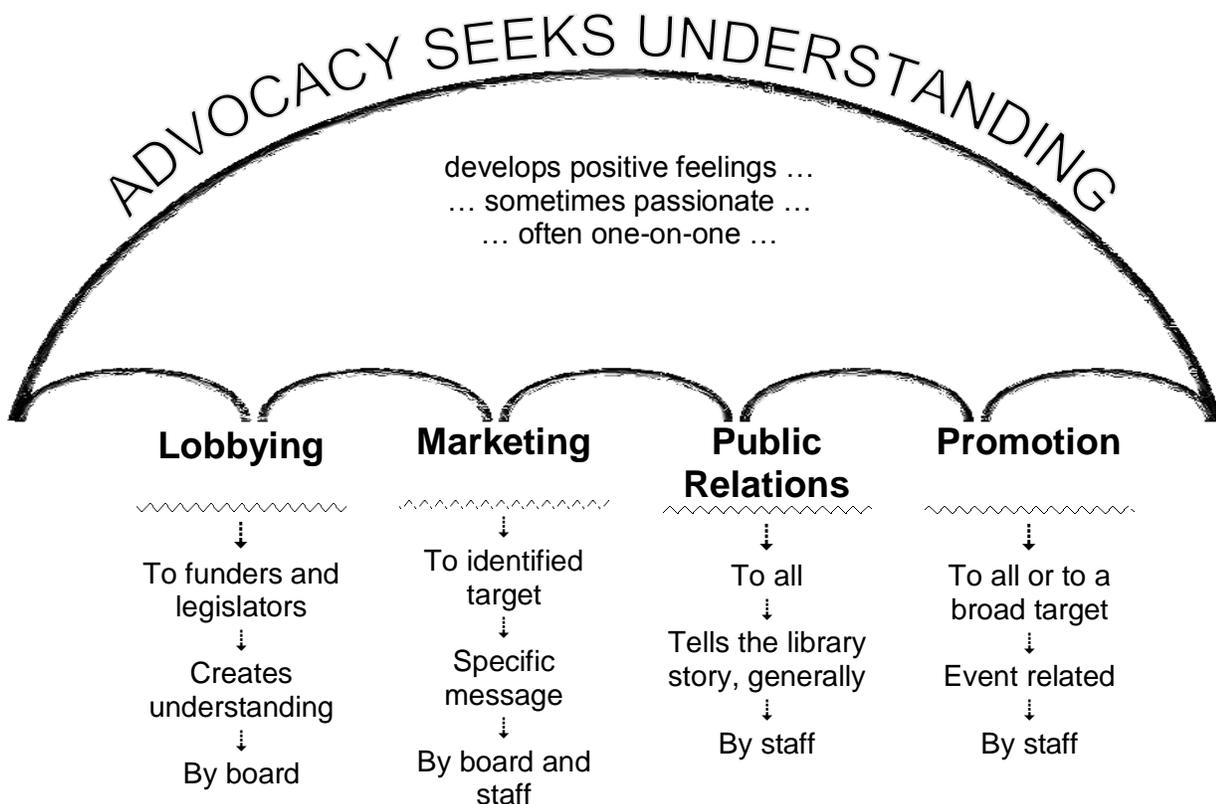
Eligibility for Provincial operating grants is contingent upon local municipal support for library service. Local library boards are responsible for preparing an annual budget and presenting that budget to their municipal council for approval.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING PROCESS

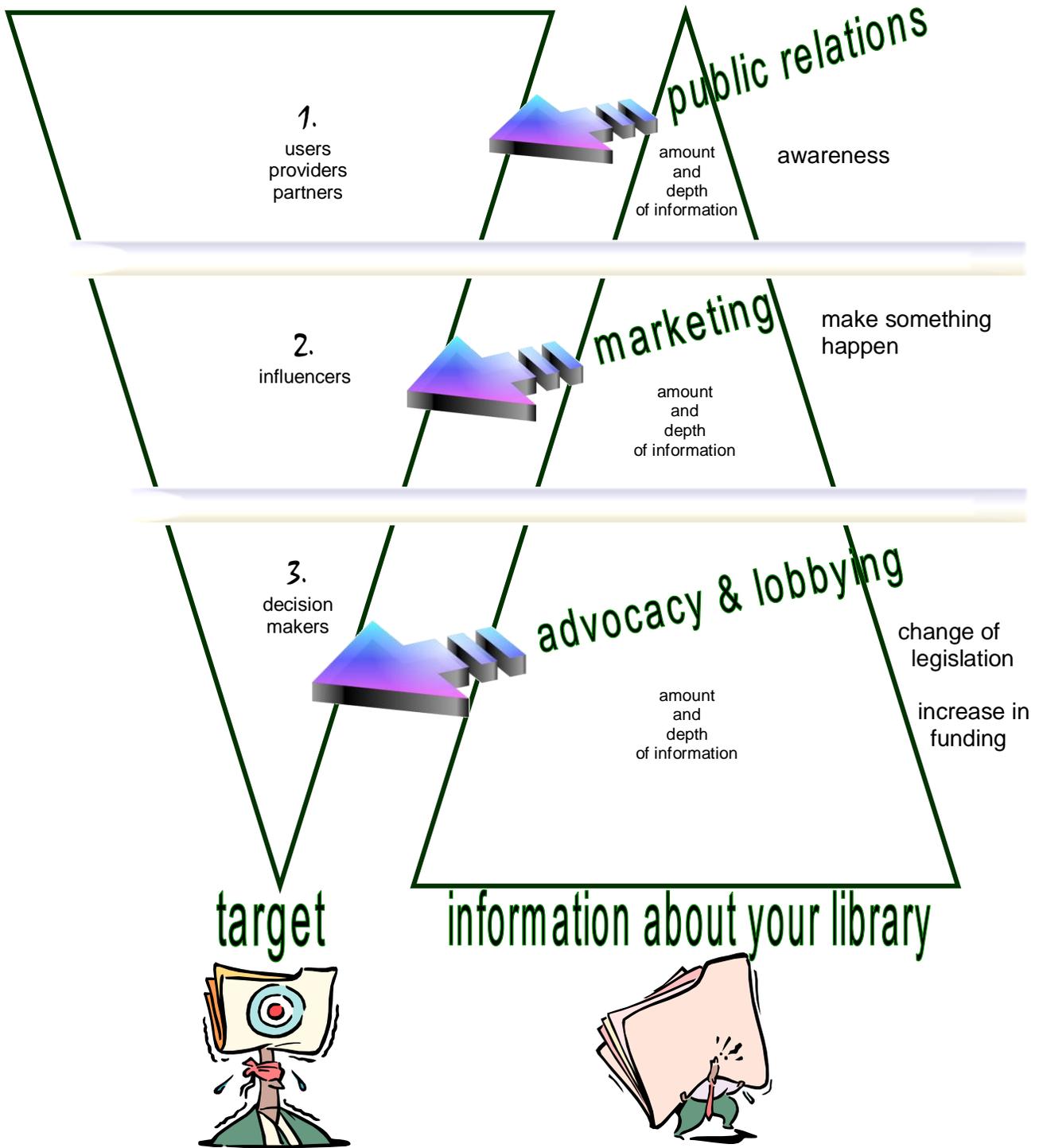
Items for approval by the Treasury Board are first presented at a Cabinet Policy Committee. The Cabinet Policy Committee helps to determine funding priorities for each Ministry. Through this process a list of top priorities are decided and then presented to the Treasury Board for review and decision.

DEFINITIONS

A common challenge in planning advocacy and lobbying efforts is to understand their relationship to other communication activities.



There is an inverse relationship between the amount and depth of information you provide to the three main categories of target groups.



STEPS FOR SUCCESS: HOW TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL PROCESS

1. DEFINE YOUR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

What is it that you want the government or Council to do for your library? If it's more funding, how much more? What will you do with it? If it is a legislative change, why? What will change in your library if you achieve your objective? Make your objective specific and measurable.

Make sure your objectives are **SMART**

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ction-oriented with
- **R**esponsibilities stated and
- **T**imed

Is your issue common to other libraries and can you work with them?

2. IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET GROUPS AND ANALYZE THEM

Look at the triangles on the previous page. Differentiate between users and partners (the largest group of people), influencers in your community, and the decision makers (the smallest group of people).

Once you've identified your specific targets, these are the people on whom you want to focus your efforts.

Select one or two:

- Elected officials (who were and may be again Candidates)
- Municipal administrators and civil servants
- Constituency staff and volunteers
- Voters, especially library customers
- People who are opinion leaders and influencers
- Partners and friends (e.g. cultural or literacy groups)

Analyze the needs and interests the groups you have targeted. Why, for instance, are the candidates running? What do they hope to achieve? What do you know about any of these people? Do you know their interests, hobbies, favorite causes, family members, where can you run into them? Compile profiles of your targets. The Province of Alberta has profiles of the MLAs that you can refer to for a photograph and biographical information.

3. DECIDE HOW TO REACH YOUR TARGET GROUPS

Decide which communication tools will deliver your message most effectively. Learn how to use different communications tools to their maximum advantage.

Communication Tools include:

Personal contact,
including small
meetings

- telephone calls, emails or faxes
TIP: email is strictly for follow up, never for a first message
- news releases to create public awareness of issues
- letters to the editor
- letters to candidates, perhaps including a library brochure or bookmark
- all-candidates meetings
TIP: when asking a question, give a sentence or two of background and frame the question so it can't be answered yes or no. Practice your questions ahead of time.
- Meetings with elected officials – prepare a 6 to 7 minute presentation and provide written material after the presentation. Follow up with a thank you note.
TIP: Appoint a designated spokesperson

Written materials

- should be short, concise, accurate and directed at the target group
- avoid jargon, use their language
- use a few meaningful statistics; testimonials are great
- give a contact name and phone number

Look at the end of this guide for how to write an effective letter and how to organize a letter writing campaign without using form letters.

In all contacts:

Stay Positive

Be Honest

Present a Professional Image

Make your written or oral presentations brief, neat, accurate, consistent and interesting.

4. DECIDE WHAT YOUR MESSAGE IS

Determine what your targets need to know about the way that libraries serve and impact the lives of their constituents and support communities so that they can make informed decisions. Remember to review the triangles before this section to determine the amount and depth of information needed depending on the target group.

Your message should be positive, focused on the issues at hand in the campaign. Maybe make more about support (how people can improve their wellness or education through library resources and services). Your message may vary slightly depending on the recipient, but the message must be consistent and repeated, repeated, repeated.

- Take advantage of existing campaigns such as @your library or campaigns sponsored by APLEN. This helps create consistency and helps reinforce other messages.

Messages:

- Libraries change lives...use examples
- People depend on libraries because....
- Newcomers use libraries to bridge from homeland to new land. For example...
- Libraries support the government's agenda for the future of Alberta through....
- People appreciate the library as a place where....(e.g.) storytime, reading, studying,
- All libraries appreciate SuperNet because it enhances the way that people enjoy library services and resources (e.g.) video conferencing, improved access to electronic resources...

5. EVALUATE YOUR EFFORTS

Evaluation is part of planning, so plan now what your measures of success will be. Link them back to your measurable objective.

- Determine what was most effective in reaching your target group (so you can do it again next time.)
- What did you learn by participating in a political campaign?

So just what does the future hold?

Lobbying is a year-round process. Lobbying is the political aspect of advocacy which is a constant process for board members, staff and library members. A once-a-year request has a much greater chance for success if you keep your target audiences informed and supportive all year long. If you've been lobbying during an election, just because the election is over don't stop exerting political influence.

Specifically, ask yourself evaluative questions all through the process:

- Did I make new contacts?
- Have I given my library (or libraries in general) a high profile?
- Have I kept my message personal, relevant, consistent, and simple?

FURTHER SUPPORT AND LINKS TO RESOURCES

Alberta Municipal Affairs. Public Library Services Branch

www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca

Link to this site for current statistics on public library service in Alberta as well as quick facts about Alberta libraries.

Alberta Provincial Associations

www.laa.ca

www.librarytrustees.ab.ca

www.aalt.org

The Library Association of Alberta and the Alberta Library Trustees Association have links on their sites to advocacy support. The Alberta Library Trustees Association site includes online tutorials to assist with advocacy development. The Library Association of Alberta is the provincial liaison to the Canadian Library Association.

American Library Association

www.ala.org

A resource for public, school, academic libraries. Website includes tools and publications.

Canadian Library Association

www.cla.ca

The Canadian Library Association/Association canadienne des bibliothèques is the leading national voice for the Canadian library and information community.

Library Advocacy Now!

www.cla.ca/divisions/capl/advocacy/

The Library Advocacy Now! program consists of background material and exercises that will make you understand your own passion for libraries and how better to tell the library story to others. It also has a step-by-step advocacy planning component. Links are provided to other advocacy resources.

You may contact Alberta members of Library Advocacy Now! For assistance in developing an advocacy plan and coaching in advocacy skills by contacting Pat Cavill Consulting at pcavill@shaw.ca

Your Local Library or Regional Library System Headquarters

Your local library or Regional Library System can help in finding specific resources to support lobbying and advocacy efforts.

SAMPLE LOBBYING PLAN

Date of plan:

What's happening:

Opportunity: What is the goal of the campaign? To gain the support – financial? voting? – of whom? – so that ...will happen.

Target: What person or group will you focus on?

Message: What the target needs to hear, briefly and positively stated, in order to act. A shorter slogan may be created for support materials or simply to be eye (or ear) catching.

Tools: Brainstorm and list all possible communication methods you could use to effectively reach the target audience.

Action	Responsible	Deadline	Comments
What specific things will be done? e.g. write a letter, make a phone call, speak at a meeting...	Who will ensure that the action is done?	When will the action occur?	Notes about revisions, costs, outcomes (useful in evaluation and planning the next campaign)
Evaluation Did you meet your goal? What was most effective? What did you learn?			

WRITING EFFECTIVE LETTERS

Use personal or business letterhead, or good quality plain paper. Type or write legibly.

Use the correct form of address or title.

Identify yourself and your connection to the issue.

Be brief and specific. Limit yourself to one issue. Use statistics sparingly and imaginatively. Make examples and quotations count.

Give reasons for your point of view. Personal experience is great. Tell how it affects you personally and why you feel the way you do.

Be reasonable – don't ask for the impossible.

Be specific about what you want. Be sure to ask a question – you're more likely to get a reply.

Don't overstate your case – exaggeration will only discredit you.

In other words, be BASIC

- **B**rief
- **A**ppreciative; accurate
- **S**pecific
- **I**nformative
- **C**ourteous

Include your address and phone number on the letter.

Don't send a form letter. Personal letters have greater impact. But there's no reason not to openly copy the letter to another person.

Timing may be important. For example, if a newly introduced bill will have a negative impact, write your MLA after the first reading. If you like the new bill, write to ask your MLA to vote yes.

Always say thank you. Postcards are a good way of sending a thank you note.

ORGANIZING A LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN (without form letters)

An effective letter-writing campaign is one where many people express a common message in their own words.

Ask people to write letters on behalf of the library or the issue and give them an information sheet.

Prepare an information sheet that includes:

- names and addresses
- the message
- ideas to support the message
- relevant background information

Paragraph 1

- Identify yourself and why you are writing.
 - “It is important to me, as a library user and board member, that the [province or council] strengthen its financial support for libraries.”

Paragraph 2, and maybe 3

Write a few sentences about how and why you use the library and how important it is to you

- what it means to have access to so many books and resources
- how valuable the information is
- how you couldn't afford to buy the number of books you read

Write what's true, and what you're comfortable saying. Use information from one of the squares on the next page, and put your personal feelings or experience into expanding the message.

<p>Libraries have an important role in efforts to increase literacy skills.</p> <p>Storytime and children’s reading programs are a basis of success in school and at work.</p> <p>It is crucial that our children develop good reading skills because ...</p>	<p>Accurate and timely information is necessary in order to understand complex issues, learn about new and different things, make rational decisions.</p> <p>Libraries support life-long learning, have resources for business people and for daily living.</p>
<p>Libraries should be tax-supported because all citizens have a right to services that benefit society as a whole.</p> <p>Libraries are often called “the poor man’s university.”</p> <p>In the 21st century, it is critical that people have resources to support life-long learning. People need to be able to upgrade their skills, as I did when ...</p>	<p>Library service has value – and is cost-effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardcover books cost upwards of \$25. • Atlases and directories can cost more than \$100. • Paperback best-sellers cost \$10, • Magazine subscriptions ... <p>For a Councillor For \$ [...] per capita – that’s less than the cost of a movie, the price of a sandwich and coffee, the cost of mailing 13 letters (whatever – do the math!) ...</p> <p>For an MLA Costs of providing excellent library service, even with sharing resources with other libraries, are soaring (postages, staff, utilities, whatever...) Provincial grants have not increased since ...</p>

The last paragraph

This is the call to action and thank you.

“Will you support increasing library grants to \$[...]? This will allow my library and others to provide the quality of library service that our residents deserve and need. Thank you for your consideration.”