Business Advocacy Network

Public policy dialogue & Advocacy:

Planning an advocacy project

Contents

Public policy dialogue & advocacy

Planning an advocacy project

1. Introduction

This handbook makes suggestions to help you plan for the implementation of your advocacy project. Because advocacy is all about effective communications, this handbook is mostly about putting together a detailed communications plan. It thus builds on the introduction in the handbook on *Communications and Public Relations*, though it does additionally introduce some project planning techniques.

Careful planning of your communications will provide you with a detailed list of actions targeting key people and milestones to help you measure progress. It will help to ensure that you use your limited resources in the most cost-effective way. In many cases, you may be able to secure reform through dialogue between public and private sectors, especially where issues are technical and uncontentious. There will, however, be occasions when it is necessary to do more to persuade policy makers. Sometimes, it will seem that it is only the policy makers who need to be persuaded; but often, to create momentum for change, there will be others with a stake in the issue who also need to be influenced.

Interest groups, including business associations, all seek to influence public policy, but often public officials themselves may aim to influence colleagues: officials make proposals within their Ministries and Agencies (at national level, or through similar arrangements at County level); Agencies make proposals to their line Ministries; Ministries make proposals to the Ministry of Finance or the Office of the President. This handbook is aimed at anyone who seeks to influence public policy and is as relevant for public officials as it is for business associations. Indeed, sometimes a business association and a government agency or Ministry may ally to lobby another part of government.

It is assumed that you already have a clearly framed issue, with comprehensive research evidence and a persuasive argument for reform.

By the end of this handbook, you will:

- Be able to define your stakeholders and target audiences
- Be able to prepare an overall approach to guide your advocacy project
- Understand how to prepare messages and match them with your target audiences
- Be able to define all the required activities
- Understand how to put all the activities together in an action plan

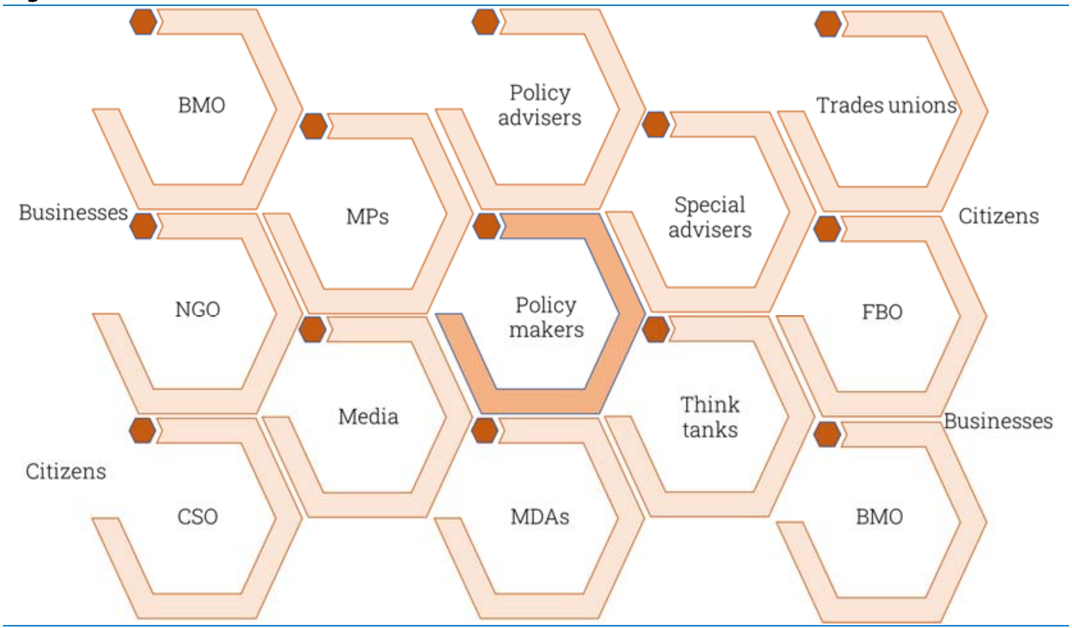
2.Stakeholders

2.1 Identifying stakeholders

Stakeholders are all those people and organisations with a stake or interest in the issue. Within the stakeholders, you will want to identify specific target audiences with whom you will plan to communicate. The policy makers are, at least temporarily, important stakeholders, but so are all those who may be affected in some way by a public policy or by a reform of a public policy. This could include businesses, employees, other business associations, trades unions, civil society organisations, etc.

It is usually fairly straightforward to identify the policy makers – Ministers and senior civil servants for legislation and senior civil servants or Agency CEOs for regulation – but think about influencers as well. These are the people and organisations who may in turn be able to influence the real decision makers – the opinion formers – and include civil servants, special advisers, chairmen of parliamentary committees, academics and think tanks and even key journalists (though in general, it is better to think of the media as a channel for communication and not as an influencer or stakeholder directly). Think too about the organisations who may be opposed to your views and who will seek to frustrate you from achieving your objectives. Remember that organisations are just groups of people, so if possible, specify the key people by name.

Figure 1: Stakeholders



2.2 Policy makers

The public sector is not homogeneous: it includes politicians (executive and backbenchers), Ministries (policy makers, analysts, regulators), Agencies (regulators, inspectors), etc as well as all those public servants working at national and local level.

If the impetus for a new policy is coming from Ministers, then they will be a key target. But you may be less concerned about the specific policy and more concerned about how it will be implemented – helping policy makers deliver their policy imperative whilst minimising any burden on business can often be a good approach and secure public sector buy-in – in which case public officials may be your key target.

Understanding the public sector, the way it operates and the policy process is as important to private sector advocates as understanding private sector needs and aspirations should be to public sector regulators. There is often little interaction between private and public sectors and, therefore, little understanding among civil servants of the possible implications for business of legislation and regulation. This can mean legislation leads to consequences which the politicians and civil servants had not foreseen and for which they do not want to be criticised.

Like everyone else, civil servants want their job to be as easy as possible, so it is sensible to assist them by preparing compelling and succinct proposals backed up by high quality evidence which, as far as possible, offer solutions to meet publicly stated policy objectives.

2.2.1 Ministries

The Ministries are most likely to be the starting point for dialogue. Identify the analysts and the people writing the policy recommendations. Ensure that they understand the implications for the private sector of their proposals. Aim to separate the economic burden from the administrative burden; for new and existing regulation, there may be scope to reduce or eliminate the administrative burden through carefully thought out proposals for implementation.

Whilst it is the politicians who (largely) set the agenda, it is officials who turn the aspiration into practice, so aim to influence the key people early. Offer solutions to officials such that they can take credit when putting proposals to Ministers.

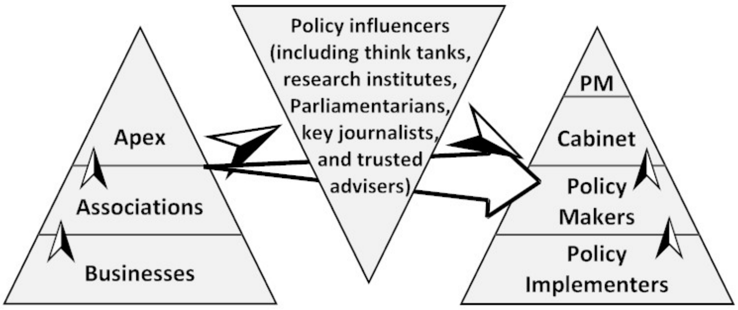
2.2.2 Ministers

If the need is to influence policy, as opposed to implementation, it is likely that there will be need at some point to influence the Minister. This needs to be well prepared. If possible, it will help to have officials 'on-side' before meeting the Minister. You will want to offer solutions, especially any that still address the policy objectives, but in a way that reduces the potential burden on business and in a way that allows the Minister to take the credit publicly for improving the enabling environment.

2.3 Opinion formers

'Opinion formers' is the term used to describe people and organisations who are influential but who are not themselves responsible for policy formulation. They will be secondary, but nevertheless important, targets. They typically include parliamentarians, ministerial special advisers, prominent journalists and academics.

Figure 2: Exerting influence



You may find that success requires you to work with and through different parties – officials, Ministers, Parliamentarians, for example – not only to bring them round to your point of view but also to encourage them to support – and promote – your position. This will require sustained effort over time.

2.3.1 Parliamentarians

Members of Parliament, who are not members of the government, can be amongst the most difficult people to influence, yet once won over can be extremely effective. They are hard to interest because either they belong to the governing party, so do not want to rock the boat, or else are in opposition and only want to pick on the salient issues which could be used to embarrass the government. If you can influence MPs to act on your behalf, however, they can lobby ministers and civil servants very effectively.

2.3.2 Agencies

Government agencies, generally, do not create policy, but are established to implement it. Typical examples are tax collection agencies or regulatory bodies such as health and safety. In their zeal to impress the government, however, they often add to the administrative burden by 'improving' the rules within the defined policy framework. Agencies may be partly or wholly funded through the fees they collect – which may drive their behaviour. Agencies may also have a role in recommending new or changed policies – and it is rare that they do so in such a way as to reduce their influence. This means that influencing agencies is quite hard. The starting point is to recognise that you are more likely to win over the agency if you focus on reducing the administration burden rather than arguing for a policy reform that leads to them playing a less important role. Proposing changes in administration which reduce their own workload whilst maintaining the influence are likely to be most effective. As with other groups, offer solutions for which they can take at least some credit.

2.3.3 Other business associations

Business associations exist primarily to promote the interests of their members – and these may not be the same as the interests of other sectors. There is conflict, for example, between indigenous manufacturers and importers wanting to import competing goods. However, there may be joint interests, for example, between soft drink manufacturers and confectionery companies on changing the regulation for sugar supply. It is important, therefore, to understand the position of other associations and, where there is a conflict or an over-lapping interest, to regard them also as a target audience. Securing consent from other associations, if not support, will add to the credibility of your position, even if it requires some compromise to get there. If there is an apex business association, either in the sector, or representing the private sector as a whole, aim to secure their consent at an early stage. Indeed, they may assist with achieving consensus across the private sector and may be able to open doors into the public sector.

2.3.4 Other interest groups

The same is true with non-governmental organisations (NGO), civil society organisations (CSO), research institutes, trades unions and others. They can be a good source of market intelligence, but they often engage in advocacy as well. Ideally, you want them to support your position rather than one diametrically opposed. If they do oppose you, and are unlikely to be won round, then you need to understand their position and have the arguments and evidence to rebut their position.

Research institutes and academic think tanks can be especially helpful. They do not often promote specific policy positions, but they do research important topics – some of which may help you – and they do influence governments through providing them with independent, unbiased research. Feeding your evidence to research institutes may encourage them to follow new lines of enquiry and may subtly change the way that they present their findings to government.

2.3.5 The public

In most cases, business associations will not need to influence public thinking, but occasionally, for issues that are salient or contentious, there may be merit in getting the public on side. By way of example, public opinion influenced alcoholic drinks regulation in Kenya and media stories about injuries sustained as a result of treatment by unqualified physiotherapists encouraged the policy makers to pass legislation promoted by the Kenya Society of Physiotherapists.

2.3.6 The media

The media can be an ally or an opponent or completely neutral. In general, you would be unlikely to want to influence the media to take a particular position. Rather, you will use the media to communicate to one or more of your other audiences. However, this will be much easier if they are at least sympathetic to your case. Occasionally, however, the media can become a campaigning organisation. The media is also a good way of generating responses, for example, from the public, so if you use the media, monitor it carefully.

You need to be clear, before using the media, about your objective, since this may affect the particular media that you use. Like policy makers, they are not homogenous. If the objective is to reach policy makers, then you need to know which newspapers they read; if the objective is to reach the general public, then you might choose local radio so as to get to a much bigger audience. If you want to reach your members, then you may use your own newsletter, but if you want to recruit members, you may use the trade press. Or even start your own magazine.

2.4 List your stakeholders

Make a list of all the organisations that you think may have a stake in your issue. Be as specific as possible. This will make it easier to remember them all and make it less likely that you forget about a key target or key influencer. It will help you later if you note why they are, or in some cases, ought to be interested in the issue. This is, if you like, the rationale for communicating to them.

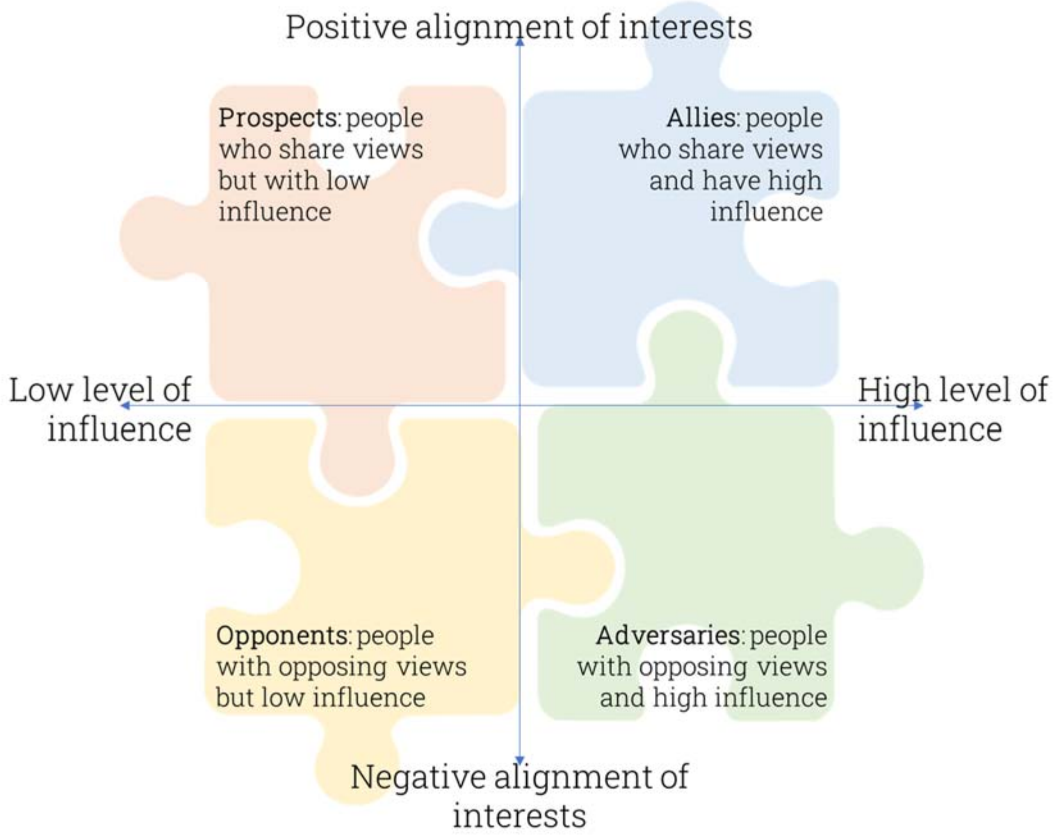
Table 1: Summary of stakeholders and their interest in the issue

Stakeholders	Interest in issue
Ministry of Tourism	Wants to increase revenue secured by government from the promotion of tourism
Kenya Tourism Board	Wants to increase the number of tourists and wants to push Kenya up the league table of desirable destinations
Kenya Tourism Federation	Wants to increase number of tourists because that will support members to grow profitably
Kenya Private Sector Alliance	Sees tourism as a major contributor to the economy, creating wealth and jobs, and wants to retain more of the tourist spend within the country
Environmental NGOs	Worried that increasing number of tourists will have a detrimental impact on the wildlife and the natural habitat

2.5 Assessing the stakeholders

You will benefit from assessing whether your stakeholders are likely to be supportive or obstructive. The UK based Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has developed a tool to help: the Alignment of Interests and Influence Matrix (AIIM). This has been adapted for our purposes such that the x-axis provides a measure of their likely influence and the y-axis provides a measure of the alignment of their interests with yours. All the people whom you have identified can then be allocated to a quadrant, depending on whether you see them as allies, prospects, opponents or adversaries (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Alignment & influence



Source: adapted from an idea by Mendizabal, ODI

Do not just guess where to place organisations. You need to undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise. Undertake desk research and review websites and other materials to understand their position. If you cannot find the information or it is out of date, ask their opinions ideally by meeting them or those close to them. Members of your board and staff may already have links or be close enough to outline their position. You will be interested in:

- Whether they are interested in the issue at all: if not, ignore them, or perhaps monitor them in case they become interested;
- How much information they already have about the issue and whether they would like more, in which case you might share your research (and they may have research that they can share with you);
- Whether they have an opinion on the issue and, if so, how firm they are;
- Whether they have taken a public position (and whether they already have their own policy); and
- If they do not share your views, or are agnostic, what are their objections to your position

Talking to stakeholders allows you to clear up misconceptions, to explore what might prevent them from sharing your position and then to explore whether you can link support for your issue to something that they already support. Once you have spoken to stakeholders, you can place them in the matrix. You will not have the luxury of sufficient resources to tackle all stakeholders, so use the matrix to prioritise the top five or six. These are your "target audiences". Focus on those organisations likely to be allies – you want to encourage them to co-operate with you – and adversaries – you need to be able to answer their criticisms even if you cannot change their opinion. Monitor the other stakeholders through media, social media and websites.

You may decide, having identified your potential allies, that there is merit in working together more closely, perhaps through an alliance or coalition. This can confer many benefits (see the factsheet on *Building Coalitions & Alliances*).

2.6 Checklist

- Brainstorm the stakeholders for the issue you intend to address. Be specific. Do not just say, government; rather, say the Ministry of Finance or the Export Credit Guarantee Department. If possible, name specific individuals.
- Identify whether members of your board, or members of staff, or association members have links to any of the key stakeholders.
- Identify the top stakeholders that you intend to engage directly, within the resources that you have available. These are your target audiences.
- Contact target audiences to identify their views and opinions and where they might fit in the matrix.
- Monitor all the stakeholders through media, social media and websites.

3. Strategy

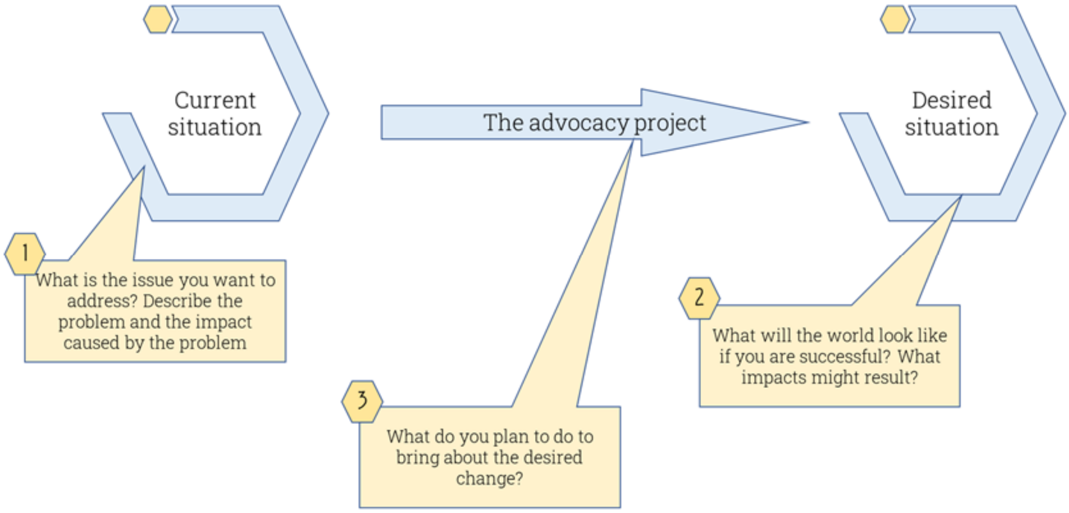
Advocacy is the act of influencing, or attempting to influence, the way that a policy maker thinks about, and acts on, an issue. So private sector advocacy describes attempts by the private sector to influence the development and implementation of public policies in an effort to improve the business environment. Depending on the objective and the target audience the advocacy might be intended to raise awareness of an issue, to seek support for a point of view, or to impel someone to act. It describes any and all activities intended to bring about a policy reform. The strategy adopted for a particular issue may depend on the issue, on the policy to be reformed and on the target audiences. It is likely that an effective strategy will therefore include:

- A clear view of what the world will look like if the advocacy is successful;
- The publication and dissemination of information, research and evidence about the issue and the implications;
- The publication and dissemination of succinct and compelling recommendations;
- Activities to bring the issue and the recommendations to the attention of key policy makers and to persuade them to do something;
- Monitoring to ensure that a decision to reform policy is implemented.

3.1 From here to there

Very simply, an advocacy strategy is a plan to take you from the current position to a different position (Figure 4). This requires that you are able to describe the current situation – so framing is important – and that you are able to describe a satisfactory alternative situation, a goal.

Figure 4: Advocacy strategy

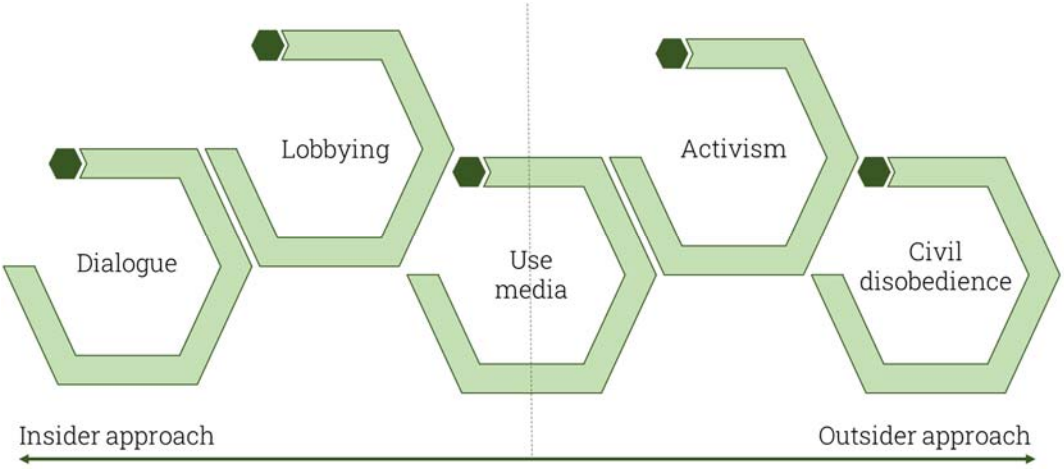


Be realistic. If you are lobbying against proposals for new regulation, then your desired future may simply be that the regulation is not enacted. But if you are lobbying about existing regulation, consider carefully where you are aiming. It is unrealistic, for example, to expect the government to abolish taxation – but you might argue that there are too many taxes, all of which take too much time and paperwork, and argue that they should be replaced by one or two taxes with simplified paperwork.

3.2 Strategic approaches

There are a number of approaches that can be taken when attempting to influence policy – you may decide to adopt a mix – and there is a tendency to use the term 'advocacy' to describe all approaches. Early decisions should be whether to take an 'insider' or 'outsider' approach and whether arguments are to be based on evidence or on interests. Business associations generally find that dialogue – a collaborative, insider approach with evidence-based argumentation – is the most effective. Public officials like such collaboration as well, because it makes it easier to access information, expertise and opinion. Partners in a genuine dialogue will work hard to understand each other's perspective so partners will tend to look for solutions that satisfy all parties. It is likely that partners engaged in dialogue will regularly share information and evidence and do their best to ensure that the evidence is objective and reliable (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Approaches to engagement



Source: Irwin (2017)

Many organisations use the term 'lobbying' to describe some of their activities. The word originates from constituents in the UK meeting their MP in the central lobby of the Houses of Parliament. Lobbying tends to describe an approach that is a bit less 'inside', though may still involve face to face discussion and still makes use of evidence-based argumentation. Face to face lobbying will often be backed up with other lobbying tactics such as media campaigns or mobilising grass roots supporters, for example, to contact their MPs.

Approaches based on narrow interests are generally inappropriate for business associations. Organisations sometimes resort to such approaches because they think that they are getting nowhere with their evidence-based arguments or because their real objective is to gain competitive advantage at the expense of others. Narrow based interest groups, or large corporates, especially those well connected into the political elite, may engage in 'special pleading', for example, to seek protection from foreign competition or subsidies for inputs or subsidies for exports, all of which distort the market and usually impact on another sector.

Sometimes organisations will take the confrontational route – and engage in some form of direct action. Too often, though, this manifests itself in behaviour perceived by most of the population to be unacceptable. There may be occasions when groups believe that they have to indulge in direct action, just to grab the attention of politicians. Sometimes this can be useful in demonstrating just how much people care about a particular issue. However, this must be done with care if it is not to backfire.

You will need to think carefully about whether and how to use the media. Some organisations lobby through the media. In general, this is not an effective approach. Some organisations shun the media completely. However, some organisations place stories in the media with the aim of reinforcing their message to policy makers, of demonstrating their proactivity to their members and of raising public awareness. However, they do not see their media coverage as a substitute for their other activities.

Most associations do not consciously think about their approach; rather they hop from one activity to another without thinking about the way in which they interact. Taking a conscious decision could make it easier for associations to think about the specific actions in which they will engage. This is important because:

- You need to be clear about your ultimate objectives;
- It helps to keep the organisation together;
- You need to be clear about the actions that you plan to undertake and how you think that these will help you to achieve these objectives;
- You need to be clear about your priorities: which objectives you would be prepared to concede in order to secure agreement on others;
- You can link actions to potential allies and supporters, even if some are coming from a different perspective.

3.3 Timing

In the US, with the adversarial nature of its politics, and the ease with which members of Congress can propose or inhibit legislation, lobbyists can wait until quite late in the process of policy making or legislation. In the EU, by contrast, with its consensus approach, by the time a directive becomes public, it is almost certain that it will be adopted.

Timing is important in advocacy because different tactics are effective at different times and different stages in the decision-making process allow different windows for influence. In general, the earlier that you can start seeking to influence government thinking, the more effective you will be. It is worth thinking about the stages in the policy formulation process. Broadly, these are:

- Agenda setting,
- Policy formulation,
- Seeking legitimacy,
- Implementation and
- Review and reform (of existing policy)

3.4 Checklist

- Be clear about your overall objectives: what do you hope to achieve?
- Decide on your overall approach – whether you going to take a predominantly insider approach, for example – and whether this is appropriate for your allies.
- What stage has the policy process reached and what approach is likely to be most effective?
- You may want to think about your fall-back position, though you not want to publicise that.

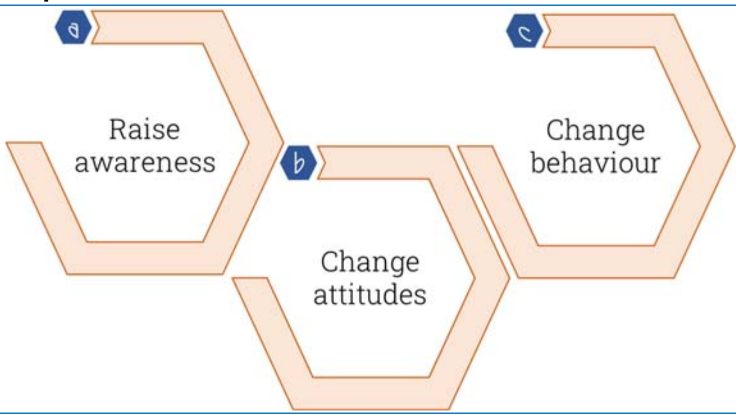
4.Purpose of communication

It is highly unlikely that your research evidence and policy position will be influential by themselves. You will need, in some way, to exert influence. You will have defined the broad approach in your strategy. Now you need to think about how you will communicate your message to your chosen audiences.

Effective advocacy requires that you can communicate your message convincingly. This requires not only that you have persuasive evidence but also that you can prepare and convey your argument in a way that is totally compelling.

Gregory (2000), in her book on planning and managing public relations campaigns, suggests that public relations objectives should address one of three levels. In private sector advocacy, it is more sensible to consider this as a progression. There may be a need to raise awareness, perhaps amongst members or the wider business community and amongst public servants and politicians, about a specific issue. There will probably be a need to change attitudes amongst key audiences so that they become supportive. Most important of all, there is a need to encourage public servants to act, that is to change behaviour, since otherwise you will not deliver the policy reform.

Figure 6: Steps in public relations



4.1 Targets & objectives

4.1.1 Identify your target audiences

You started to think about your target audiences when you identified your stakeholders. It can help to divide them into primary audiences – the policy makers who can enact the change that you need – and secondary audiences – the opinion formers who will create a suitable environment in which change is likely to happen. In both cases, include them on your priority list. For each, identify, by name if possible, the specific people whom you need to influence. Following your stakeholder mapping, you should also be able to list their current view and then consider the arguments that might persuade them to act.

Table 2: Example of a summary of target audiences

Target audiences	Target people	Current view
Ministry of Tourism	The Cabinet Secretary (+ details of how to reach)	
Kenya Tourism Board	Name + contact details	
Kenya Tourism Federation	Name + contact details	
Kenya Private Sector Alliance	Name + contact details	

4.1.2 Objective(s) sought from target audiences

Your ultimate objective could be delivered in a number of ways. For example, the requirement for a coffee movement permit could be abolished. An alternative might be to license authorised transport companies to move coffee and that a requirement is for them to keep careful records including the ability to trace individual consignments. But what is that you specifically want from the person whom you are targeting? The response you seek will depend on the audience.

If you are meeting a Minister, your objective may be to persuade him or her to abolish the licence. Even a Minister, though, cannot usually change policy unilaterally, so your objective might be that he or she agrees to take a proposal to Cabinet. In other words, the response that you want is for the Minister to acknowledge that the existing requirements impose an unnecessary burden on coffee producers with the consequence that more farmers are reducing the amount of coffee that they grow because it is becoming unprofitable, which results in less foreign exchange and lower tax revenue, and that he or she is willing to take the next steps.

If you are meeting the apex BMO, the objective might simply be to persuade them to open a door to a particular person in government. But it may also be to ask them to raise the issue at specified meetings of public and private sectors.

4.1.3 Messaging

You will have thought about the message when you framed the issue and then made recommendations in your policy position. Your overall message needs to be broadly the same for every audience, supported by evidence and examples. Set out your message based on the difference that you are seeking for business. For example: Our objective is to reduce the paperwork, time and cost in securing a coffee movement permit. Note that this does not say that you hope to abolish the requirement, though that would be one way of delivering the objective.

4.1.4 Evidence, examples & materials

You should ensure that you have good evidence and examples to support your case. You may have all the evidence in your research report – but if it 100 pages long, the Minister will not plough through it – so select and emphasis the key evidence to support your case with each target audience. Choose the evidence that meets the information needs of each audience.

Table 3: Information needs of target audiences

Target audience	Information needs
The Minister	Short, to the point and visually appealing, with the arguments in favour of taking action, and good narratives to show the benefits.
Policy officials	In addition to the information provided to the Minister, policy officials will generally require more detail, both about the specific recommendations, but also about alternative solutions.
Policy analysts	Will probably want still more detail, ideally including costings of alternative solutions, so that they have the evidence to reassure the Minister that decisions are sensible.
Media	Human interest stories describing problems arising from a particular issue – and how addressing the issue would make a difference to those people

Your materials and, in particular, examples bring lobbying to life: if you have an example of a farmer that has been hit hard, then use that to show the problem that the regulation is causing.

Policy position papers will need detailed evidence; a website needs photographs; if you are working with a radio or television production company, you need to know what interests them. The 'messaging matrix' communications action plan below provides a useful means of summarising your messaging across audiences.

In some parts of the world, especially the US, lobbyists draft legislation and regulation, without waiting to be asked, as part of their lobbying efforts. There have been attempts to do this in Africa as well, though it is less successful. However, there may well be opportunities to work with the public sector to write (or rewrite) the specific rules for the way in which legislation or regulation will be implemented. Drafting legislation may also provide a good media story.

4.2 Actions & communications channels

The actions that you undertake to communicate are closely connected to the communication channels that you choose. These might include, for example, preparing written statements, holding press conferences, organising meetings or visits. Which activities are likely to communicate your message most effectively?

There are many different channels available which provide a means to communicate your message. Some of these are shown in Table 4. Choose the combination that is likely to be most effective in reaching your target audiences and prioritise those, taking into account your available time and money. Adopting an insider strategy, and seeking meetings with key officials and politicians, is usually the best approach, not least because you can engage in two-way communication, which is much better than one-way communication. In general, two-way communication takes twice as long, makes people more confident that they have understood and is more accurate than one-way communication. Importantly it allows you to deal with misunderstandings and clarifications; it provides an opportunity to hone your argument.

Table 4: Communications channels

Face to face	Printed	Digital	Other
▪ Meetings – with policy makers & influencers ▪ Lobbying Parliamentarians ▪ Field visits & experiential learning ▪ Seminars & conferences ▪ Community events ▪ Networks ▪ Social events	▪ Research reports ▪ Policy position papers ▪ Case studies ▪ Press releases ▪ Briefing notes ▪ Opinion pieces ▪ Advertisements & posters ▪ Letters ▪ Leaflets	▪ Website ▪ Blogs ▪ Social media ▪ E-newsletters ▪ Radio broadcasts ▪ Podcasts ▪ TV broadcasts	▪ Via members (who may need to be supported through printed and web-based materials) ▪ Word of mouth (as above)

The following are some of the communications channels you will need to understand and use when advocating policy reform.

4.2.1 Meet with policy makers

Meetings are important to identify potential allies and informants, to understand the perspective of target audiences so that you can slant your arguments appropriately, to present key points verbally and to develop trusted relationships. Although meetings take more time, they have far greater impact. It is essential to invest the time if you want to influence policy makers. Aim to get to know the key people in the relevant Ministries or agencies. This will help to build understanding and empathy and give ready-made channels of communication when they are needed. This will be all the easier if you can build a personal rapport.

To get the most out of meetings, it is essential to prepare. Agree who will say what and how long you will focus on each subject. These meetings are the time to thrash out the detail of regulatory proposals, to sound out ideas and try to identify up and coming issues. During your meetings:

- ask questions – use open questions, probing questions, hypothetical questions
- listen actively –ensure you understand what is being said to you – and summarise regularly
- watch for signals – especially non-verbal signals such as eye contact and body orientation – and take care about the non-verbal signals you are sending out
- talk the same language

It is important to meet regularly, ideally with a fixed programme of meetings rather than organising them as the need arises. This makes it more likely that you will discover at an early stage about proposals to change public policy and so be in a better position to influence the eventual outcome. Ideally, you and your key partners (including other business associations or civil society organisations) should aim to institutionalise the dialogue arrangement so that it does not depend on the current personalities. Keep your members up to date with what you learn.

From time to time you will need to meet with the Minister on particular issues. These meetings can be brief and it is essential that you prepare thoroughly for them in order to gain anything from them. Sometimes it is not possible to meet the Minister and you may need to meet with one of their special advisers. From the association's perspective this can be at least as useful as meeting the Minister as often a special adviser may be more engaged in the detail of a policy proposal or developing the government's position.

Think carefully about who will attend, who all need to be completely credible with relevant experience and knowledge. Wherever possible, invite one or more members, especially board members to attend, alongside staff. Find out who is likely to be there with the Minister and aim that a similar number, or fewer, of your representatives attend. They should be personable and able to think on their feet. Remind them that they are there to represent your sector and just their own company. Remind them that you will want to respond positively to Ministerial suggestions but cannot make decisions without consulting the rest of the sector.

Agree an agenda for the meeting with the Minister's staff. This is not a time for detail or low priority issues. Think carefully about how the Minister might assist you and focus on your two or three most pressing issues. Roughly divide the available time between the issues so that you know that the meeting is running to time and nothing important will be missed. Agree in advance who will lead on which issue. If necessary, rehearse what you might say and the examples you will use to illustrate your case. Personal experience can be very powerful. Think through what props or video clips – very easy to have available on your tablet – might bring your case to life and what written material you can leave with them. Brainstorm likely questions and think through what you might say in response. It is worth having extra material with you that may answer specific points, but remember Ministers will not have time to read detailed background papers.

Members attending will find it helpful to have a written brief detailing:

- Timing and logistics (including location of meeting and how long to allow to clear any security arrangements);
- Who is attending on the Minister's side and any relevant background;
- Who is representing the industry and what role they will play; and
- What issues the meeting will cover and the main points the association wants to get across, background material including policy and position statements.

During the meeting, association staff should do what they can to ensure that everyone is introduced and outline the purpose of the meeting. Aim to keep the meeting on track and keep an eye on the time. Make a note of any action points and thank the Minister and his team.

Following the meeting, write to thank the Minister, confirming any actions and including any additional material that either came up in the meeting or that occurred to you just after you left. If you or your members have committed to action, ensure that it happens.

4.2.2 Lobby Parliamentarians

Talking to Parliamentarians can be extremely effective. They can hold the executive to account. They can quiz ministers about what they are doing and why. In many countries, they hold public hearings, giving a further opportunity to make your case. For new or revised legislation, they will consider the proposals in detail and may make their own proposals. Monitor the activities of MPs so that you know when they may be taking an interest in your area.

Before lobbying, map your members against the MPs' constituencies. Contact your members to understand whether they have existing links with their local MP. This has two benefits. First it ensures that the association does not undermine work members are already doing and, second, an MP is far more likely to pay attention to an industry with a link to their constituency. Many members will not have engaged in advocacy before and the association will play an important role in building the members' confidence and supporting them.

If you have the resources, or if you are able to pool resources with other associations, there may be merit in appointing a Parliamentary Liaison Officer – who can closely monitor parliamentary activity, get to know MPs and so be able both to feedback intelligence at an early stage, but also to act as point person when you need to meet with MPs.

Facilitate meetings of MPs who have an interest in your topic, for example through arranging an interesting speaker, or hosting a lunch or reception for MPs to meet your members who are also their constituents. An association may have to work quite hard to demonstrate to an MP why their case is of interest, for example by working out how many people in their constituency work in your sector.

Many MPs listen carefully to community radio to keep up with constituent views. If you are struggling to meet with MPs, then seek radio coverage of your issue.

Offering dinner or inviting MPs to a reception can be a good way of getting to know them and gently to start to influence their thinking.

4.2.3 Organise social events

If people know you, and especially if they like you, you will find it easier to influence them. The best way to get to know people, whether they are your own members, or public officials, or politicians, or journalists, or opinion formers is to organise occasional social events. Participants should feel that they genuinely are social events, so do not be too heavy in discussing the issues, but do not entirely let the opportunity slip either. You may, for example, want to brief staff and board so that each person has one or two targets to whom they should talk during the event with a specific objective in mind. Charity and community events can be a useful opportunity to meet.

Invite your contacts to your conferences. Indeed, they can often be a useful source of speakers. Field visits can also provide them useful opportunities to understand your work as well as opportunities to talk less formally.

4.2.4 Provide experiential learning

Some business associations have found that providing training or experiential learning opportunities for stakeholders, especially Parliamentarians and journalists, can be good way of raising awareness about issues and encouraging them to think more deeply about topics that they previously may have ignored.

Encouraging stakeholders to come to a seminar or participate in a field trip or factory visit gives you an opportunity to spend more time with them, getting to know them, understanding what makes them tick and discussing their needs. You will then be much better able to address those needs – usually through sharing information, say, through regular briefing papers, through newsletters and through passing on titbits of information when you come across them.

4.2.5 Involve members

Involve your members in policy formulation since otherwise you will not know that you have their support. It is sensible, too, to ensure that they have the evidence and arguments to promote the association's positions. In other words, you want every member to be an ambassador and advocate for the association. This is particularly important where public officials may have regular contact with your members, as in the agricultural sector for example. So ensure your members are properly briefed by giving them copies of policy position papers. For complex issues, you could provide additional briefing including question and answer sheets. If you have local branches, think about providing materials so that branch officers can give a presentation or can encourage a debate at a branch meeting.

4.2.6 Mobilise grass roots support

Grass roots support means the support of individual businesses or members – though associations may also be able to mobilise other stakeholders. Grass roots support is not necessary for all campaigns but sometimes 'people power' can make a valuable contribution. Mobilisation describes the means by which an organisation stimulates its members to lobby Ministers, Parliamentarians and others and encourage them to support or oppose a policy proposal.

Grass roots campaigns tend to relate to large, national public issues which impact on many people; the resolution of more technical and detailed issues may be better suited to dialogue. A grass roots campaign should not be undertaken simply as an end in itself, but rather as a way of reinforcing more traditional 'insider' lobbying strategies. Successful mobilisation can bring two advantages to a lobby campaign – weight of opinion and credibility. But remember that quality is more important than quantity. Politicians know that there are few issues on which substantial numbers of voters will spontaneously make their views known; most grass roots campaigns are seen by politicians as the result of an organisation mobilising its members. Thus, it is important that individual voters communicate a genuine view of how the proposed policy might relate to their own situation. Involve your grass roots through letter writing, petitions, rallies and marches, internet, public meetings, direct action and non-participation.

4.3 Timing

Think about the timing for each of your actions. Is there an external timetable, for example because the government is on a schedule, or do you have the luxury of being able to set your own timetable? Even if you do, you may want to set a timetable to keep you on track.

4.4 Responsible person

Actions are much more likely to happen if you appoint someone to be responsible. Otherwise, it is too easy for everyone to conclude that it is someone else's responsibility.

4.5 Checklist

- Prioritise the stakeholders: communicate with allies and potential allies at an early stage and if possible agree how you will work together on the issue; identify adversaries at an early stage so that you can refine your arguments to answer their criticisms and concerns
- Identify target audiences
- Articulate the message for each audience, and specifically the key messages that you will communicate to your allies and to the ultimate audience, the policy makers.
- Choose the communication channels for each audience
- Explain how you will know if you have been successful with each audience

5. The communications plan

We are now in a position to pull together all aspects of the communications into a single plan, also called a messaging matrix. You can choose the headings that make most sense for you but the ones in the example are a good starting point:

- Target audience: Be clear and precise. Ideally, name names.
- Rationale: The justification for why it is appropriate to target this audience.
- Objective: A statement of what you want the target audience to do as a result of your communication.
- Key messages: the messages, the arguments, the justification that will persuade the target audience to undertake the action that you desire.
- Channels: The means by which you will reach or communicate to the target audience.
- Actions: What you need to do to communicate your message.

Look at the example in table 5 below.

Table 5: Target audiences and means of communication

Target audience	Rationale	Objective	Key messages	Channels	Actions
Ministry of Finance	The Ministry of Finance is interested in all aspects of business and especially interested where businesses are subject to fees and levies and market distorting restrictions	Ministry of Finance to encourage Min of Ag to address issue by opening up the market	Importing sugar is detrimental to balance of payments and foreign exchange earnings. Kenyan farmers can be supported to develop a world class industry	Via Economic Secretary	1. Documentary evidence available 2. Policy position & arguments prepared (Presentation material including policy position, arguments and fact files) 3. Meet with key personnel
COMESA	The trade bloc is committed to free trade and has extended its waiver of protection for Kenya's sugar industry repeatedly, but now says Kenya must conform and open its market	COMESA to encourage Min of Ag to address issue by opening up the market	Impending regulations are in breach of COMESA agreements. Competition will drive reparative structural adjustment	Via COMESA committee established to assure Kenyan compliance on sugar industry	1. Documentary evidence available 2. Policy position & arguments prepared 4. Meet with key personnel
Economists & academics	These technical experts provide thought leadership and input to many of the primary target markets	Economists and academics to engage in sugar industry analysis and with policy formulators, principally in the Min of Ag	The scale of industry breakdown has been accompanied by too little analysis; there is an urgent need to review the impact of price controls, miller subsidy and the levy	Direct contact and invites via email invites to a 'driving sugar thinking' initiative	1. Documentary evidence available 2. Policy position & arguments prepared 5. Meet with key personnel 6. Develop website access to case-building proof
Kenya National Alliance of Sugarcane Farmers' Organizations	These lobby groups are pushing for sugarcane farmers' interests	Other lobby groups to adopt common position with SUCAM and to work alongside	Sugar farmers and their associations need to collaborate and all promote a common message	Direct contact with CEOs and chairs of sugar farmer associations	1. Documentary evidence available 2. Policy position & arguments prepared 7. Prepare memorandum for associations setting out activities asked of them 8. Engage with farmers organizations

Target audience	Rationale	Objective	Key messages	Channels	Actions
Ministry of Agriculture	The Ministry is responsible for steering proposals for revised legislation and regulation through Parliament and Cabinet	Analysts and others in the Min of Ag to reflect on the options to deliver the policy imperative Min of Ag to facilitate a meeting between SUCAM and their partners and the Minister Min of Ag to agree to work with SUCAM to develop a comprehensive policy for the development of the sugar sector	The sugar agreement is anti-competitive and damaging to thousands of farmers. A key problem with the sugar industry is poor sugar cane: poor cane makes expensive sugar. No one thrives on expensive sugar. Supporting mills and fixing markets will not make poor sugar cane competitive. Kenya needs research, extension and open markets to improve its sugar industry.	Via personal contact to key directors and special advisors. Reinforced through placing appropriate stories in the media	1. Documentary evidence available 2. Policy position & arguments prepared 9. Meet with key personnel

Source: Reforming sugar regulation proposals: a public relations strategy for SUCAM, prepared by African Laughter. An annotated version is available at businessadvocacy.net/dloads/prSugarEX.pdf. Note that this has been prepared for a BMO, so has more detail than a BMO might expect to prepare if the BMO was doing this for itself. The key sections for a plan written by a BMO for its own use would the purpose of the communications strategy (in other words, what is the ultimate objective of the communications strategy (which may not always be to reform policy), the stakeholder analysis (if that does not already exist) and the table showing the target audiences, messages and means of communication.

In the table, you will notice that the actions are all numbered and that some numbers and actions are repeated for different target audiences. That is because these actions are the same one, but are required for those different audiences. The plan sets out clear messages and desired behaviour by the target audiences, but it does not give any indication of additional activities that may be required, or how long may be needed, or levels of effort, or budgets. For these you will need to do more planning and that is briefly covered in the next section (and more extensively in other handbooks and factsheets).

6. Action plans

The key plan will be your communications action plan but there are other project management techniques that will help you to prepare and manage your plan and which can be used alongside, and to manage, the communications plan. Indeed, the key to success is to work consistently and systematically from a clear beginning, through a precise set of steps to a pre-determined end point – and this requires a plan. Project management processes provide a framework for implementation. They define the planning, budgeting, directing, controlling and monitoring functions within specified time and resource constraints. We plan because:

- We do not want to forget anything
- We want to be confident things will succeed
- We want to be organised
- We need to be able to share the activity with members

Planning should be a continuous activity. The intention is not to impose a straightjacket, but to ensure that necessary activities happen in a structured way. Objectives must be clear, specific, achievable and should relate to your wider strategy. Hopefully, the planning stage will help you anticipate – and address – potential problems. But as the project progresses, continue to review objectives: they may need to be changed, or the project abandoned, in the light of experience. This is especially true in advocacy. The aim of project planning then is:

- to determine all the activities required for successful completion
- to determine the relationship between activities (that is, to identify the activities that are dependent on the completion of earlier activities) and which activities are independent and can, therefore, be undertaken in parallel (resources permitting)
- to identify the time required for each step
- to consider the resources, including people and money, required

There are many planning techniques and tools. Two are described in brief here – factsheets on *Gantt Charts* and *Project Management* provide more information – and you will, in addition, need a budget – see *Effective financial management*.

6.1.1 Flow charting

Flow charting can help you to think through all the elements of a project including responses at key decision points. A flow chart is a model of a process, graphically representing the steps and the sequences within it, using symbols such as rectangular boxes for activities and diamond boxes for decisions. Generally, the flow is down the page unless a decision takes the flow back to repeat an earlier activity. Flow charts will assist you to reach a shared understanding of a process and the steps required for effective implementation. It should help identify steps which may be problematic (see example below).

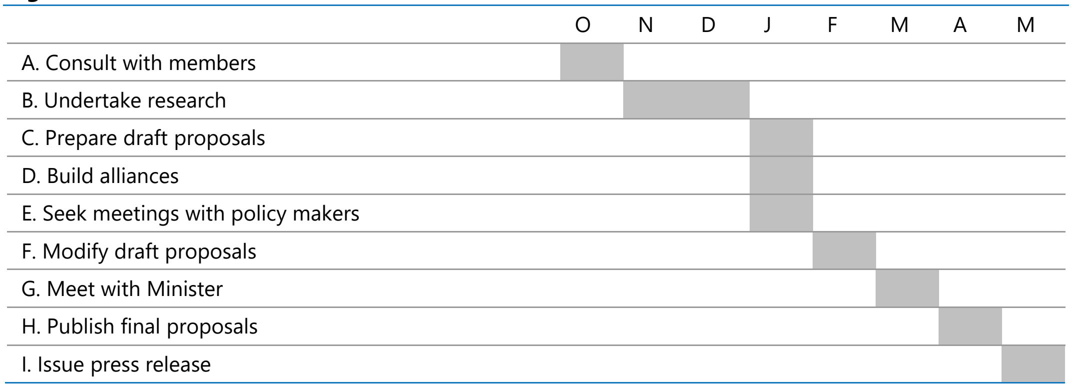
Figure 7: Flow chart

A carefully thought out flowchart can be used as the basis for preparing Gantt charts and critical path analyses.

6.1.2 Gantt charts

The Gantt chart – named after Henry Gantt – is used for planning and scheduling and is probably the most useful of all project planning techniques. A Gantt chart provides a simple overview of related activities and their expected durations, though it does not show the level of effort required for each activity. It is drawn as a series of horizontal bars with each bar representing an activity and the length of the bar representing the time required. Bars should be placed such that dependent activities are sequential though the chart does not force this and dependences may not always be obvious simply by looking at a chart so take care as you prepare it (see example below).

Figure 8: Gantt chart



Note that some activities in the example are independent and can be undertaken simultaneously, provided that sufficient resources are available. However, some activities cannot start until others are complete. For example, you cannot prepare the draft policy proposal until you have completed the research. Us the chart to monitor and manage your activities; if things change, you need to in control of the changes rather than the changes being in control of you.

If you have complicated projects to manage, you may find project planning software such as Microsoft Project helpful. For simple projects, most people use Excel: a template is available at www.businessadvocacy.net.

6.2 Checklist

- Think carefully about all the steps - prepare a flow chart if that helps
- For each step in the chart, consider the time, the duration and the resources required
- Prepare a Gantt chart to provide an overall timescale and project checklist
- Prepare a budget
- If you do not have the budget available, prepare a funding proposal and look for the money

Further reading and further information

- Mendizabal, E, The Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM), ODI, see www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6509.pdf
- Johnson, G. & Scholes, K. (1993), "Exploring Corporate Strategy", Prentice Hall
- Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D.P. (2001), "The strategy focused organisation", Harvard Business School Press
- Fisher, R. & Ury, W (1990), Getting to 'Yes', Hutchinson.
- Start, D & Hovland, I (2004), Tools for policy impact: a handbook for researchers, ODI
- Handbooks, factsheets and annotated examples all available at businessadvocacy.net

Business Advocacy Network

This series of advocacy competence handbooks – divided into modules and units – is intended to support business membership organisations (BMOs) to engage in public private dialogue and to advocate improvements to the business environment. You are free to use the units and other materials provided that the source is acknowledged. The handbooks are all available at businessadvocacy .net.

Module 5: Managing advocacy projects

5.1 Planning an advocacy project

This module offers a basic introduction to public private dialogue. It introduces the five step approach to advocacy and stresses the importance of effective advocacy communications.

The Business Advocacy Network is an initiative of Irwin Grayson Associates and can be found at businessadvocacy.net. IGA can be found at irwingrayson.com and contacted at david@irwin.org. You can follow David Irwin on twitter at @drdavidirwin.