



What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is part of advocacy, and part of active citizenship. Lobbying involves attempts to influence specific legislation at the local or national level while advocacy is focused on educating about a specific issue and may be directed to many different types of stakeholders.

Disability lobbying is about speaking up about the issues and problems faced by people with disabilities. Lobbying is about speaking up about the changes that need to happen to make life better for people with disabilities through them accessing their rights.

Who can lobbying be directed at?

The people or groups you might lobby include:

- Politicians
- Government workers
- Service providers e.g. where you work, your day programme
- Local community groups.

Types of Lobbying

Lobbying can be carried out through formal meetings and communications to duty bearers, or it may be informal through conversations in social settings in the community. It is important to build relationships with duty bearers for this to be successful and to help them understand your issues and perspectives.

Consultations: In many countries there are now many NGOs or interest groups who have an opinion on policy issues. The government may launch a 'consultation' to gather opinions and views on a topic. Try to be present at these consultations or feed in your views by sending a short, well written document. An important advocacy skill you should develop is the ability to analyze and comment on strategies, policies and legislation. This is helped by relevant policy knowledge, and knowing your issue thoroughly from a practical perspective.

Face to Face Meetings: These play an important role in lobbying. They may take a long time to arrange – be persistent. Once you have a meeting with a decision-maker, prepare well. It is usually good to go with one or two colleagues, and each of you should have a role. For example: one may do introductions, another describe the research, another give personal testimony. It will probably be a short meeting. Try to make a timetable and stick to it. Have a small number of points you want to make and make sure you say them. Do not get diverted. And - most importantly – do not forget your 'ask'!

Working in networks or coalitions you may get the chance to feed the views of a number of agencies to the 'target'. It is advantageous if your organization is chosen to represent a coalition because you get to meet the decision makers face to face.

Presentations: Making presentations on your issue can help to influence various policy audiences. This may be with photos, or a poster, but nowadays is more likely with a computer. Therefore, in your group you need someone who can speak eloquently, and someone who can make a short presentation on the computer. ('PowerPoint' is the best tool.) This will depend on the meeting – be sure to find out beforehand what is expected, how formal it will be, how long, and who will be there.

Conferences, Seminars, Public Meetings, Etc.: You can lobby on your issue at any relevant conferences, seminars, public meetings, workshops or other relevant events. This has the big advantage that key policy thinkers on your issue will come and be present in the same place, focused on discussing the issues.

Stages of lobbying

1. **Picking your battle:** There may be many issues you want to lobby on but prioritise these, such as by identifying some of the biggest barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and identifying which have the best potential to change.
2. **Doing your homework:** Make sure you have as many facts about a situation as possible. This might include gathering or researching data, finding case studies, identifying relevant UN CRPD articles, SDG goals etc.
3. **Mapping your lobbying environment:** Understand who are your allies and opponents. For example, is this an issue relevant to your membership only, or to all persons with disabilities.
4. **Drawing up a lobbying plan:** Decide on your best course of action to make your case.
5. **Picking your allies:** If your topic is relevant to all OPDs, consider working in a coalition to be more powerful.
6. **Raising money:** You may need to find resources such as funds for travel or for communication.
7. **Planning your communication:** Think about what the most effective strategy might be for your issue, and who should communicate it, when and where.
8. **Holding face to face meeting:** Prepare well and rehearse your arguments. Keep calm and polite and do not get frustrated or angry.
9. **Monitoring and implementation:** Follow up is important to reinforce your lobbying and push for action.
10. **Sticking to the lobbying rules:** Make sure your lobbying is always within the law and respectful.

HOW TO BECOME A CITIZEN LOBBYIST

1

PICK YOUR BATTLE

How do you choose yours? Be as passionate as you are strategic about your cause

2

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Being prepared will help you to keep your cool and give you credibility

3

MAP YOUR LOBBYING ENVIRONMENT

Before designing a strategy, know your possible allies and opponents

4

DRAW UP A LOBBYING PLAN

Identify the best course of action to make your case

5

PICK YOUR ALLIES

Be open-minded! Increase the attention of policymakers by having a broader-based coalition

6

RAISE MONEY

While volunteering work wonders, you might still face costs

7

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATION

Work out how and when to talk, and to whom. Sometimes you may need a messenger!

8

FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Know how to introduce yourself and 'speak the language' decision-makers use

9

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Stay vigilant! Make sure that your cause moves forward

10

STICK TO THE LOBBYING RULES

What can and can't you do? As a citizen, the sky is the limit to your advocacy!

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