11. Campaigning and influencing

11.11 Planning a Campaign

Overview

This information sheet will discuss the difference between campaigning and lobbying, along with tips on how third sector groups should plan their campaign, consideration of Charity Commission Guidance on the matter, and where to get more information.

What's the difference between campaigning and lobbying?

The terms campaigning and lobbying are often used interchangeably, but it is worth considering the difference between the terms and thinking about whether one, or other, or both actions are likely to suit your purposes.

Lobbying is the practice of individuals and organisations trying to influence the opinion of political decision makers. It takes its name from the lobbies or hallways of Parliament where MPs and peers gather before and after debates in the Commons and Lords chambers. Traditionally, people wishing to influence the opinions of MPs or peers have frequented the lobbies seeking to persuade members of the validity of a particular viewpoint. However, nowadays the term lobbying is often used when referring more specifically to the work of private companies known as lobbyists, employed by organisations to represent their views to political decision makers. However, this work can also be undertaken by voluntary sector campaigns officers, public affairs officers or parliamentary officers in order to gain support for charity's campaigning work and influence Parliamentary (or Assembly) decision making.

Campaigning, on the other hand, is the process of making and using organised, planned actions on specific issues with the aim of changing the policies of behaviours of groups and/or institutions.

So, lobbying techniques might be used as part of the bigger process of campaigning.

What does the Charity Commission have to say about campaigning?

Some registered charities have concerns about the extent of campaign work they can undertake, believing that the Charity Commission does not allow campaigning activities. The Charity Commission provide extremely full guidance on this issue in their document:

CC9 - Speaking Out - Guidance on Campaigning and Political Activity by Charities – This can be found on the Charity Commission website at www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.aspx? and you should check this if you are in any doubt, but in broad terms the Commission's position is that campaigning and political activity (but not party political activity) is a legitimate and valuable part of the activities of a charity where it is undertaken to support the delivery of its charitable purpose. But it must not be the continuing or sole activity of the charity, nor must it become the reason for the charity's existence. The Commission takes a positive view of campaign work in the context of the pursuit of charitable aims and its position can be summarised in this Commission statement:

'The experience of charities means that it is right that they should have a strong and assertive voice. Often they speak for those who are powerless, and cannot make their case themselves. Sometimes charities confront extreme social injustice, which they will want to tackle head-on. The work that charities do, and the major role they play in public life, is something they should be proud of.'

Planning a campaign - issues to consider

The critically important word here is 'planning'. You should certainly spend time planning your campaign before embarking on ad hoc activities. Taking time out to think about the whole campaign cycle will give you a higher chance of success. One of the more common pitfalls of campaign activity is to jump straight into thinking about what campaign techniques and tactics to use without first doing the planning work. Technique selection should be one of the final steps in the planning process as they should derive from and be informed by all the planning work.

Below are some of the key issues you should think about when planning your campaign:

- **Select your issue carefully**
  What issues are important to your client group / stakeholders?
  Is there an opportunity to achieve change - what is happening in the external environment that makes this a good (or a bad) time to campaign?
  Is there a consensus about what needs to be done?
  Can you present a solution rather than a problem? It is much easier to campaign for a solution ie. specific things that you want changed or implemented, rather than simply saying you don't like the way things are at the moment.

- **Resources/materials**
  What resources do you have e.g. staff capacity / volunteers and supporters?
  What resources do you need e.g. campaign materials, publications?
  Do you have a dedicated budget for this work?

- **Develop a strong evidence base**
  Legitimacy is essential - does your evidence come from technical expertise and/or representative experience?

Do you need to commission some research or do some research yourself?

Are there other sources of information / statistics you can draw on?

Make sure your research is relevant e.g. you need Welsh statistics for a Welsh campaign

Try to locate case studies and real-life examples - these can be extremely powerful and can be more likely to be picked up by the media than dry narrative.

- **Establish your target audiences**
  Make sure you are approaching the people who have the power to change things – especially important in a devolved context when some responsibilities lie in Wales and some remain in the UK.
  You may wish to consider Primary and Secondary targets.
  Think about routes to influence these audiences - this is where you can begin to think about whether lobbying techniques might be appropriate.

- **Establish campaign aims and key messages**
  Frame your messages appropriately for your audience(s). For example, a tabloid newspaper may respond better to an emotive human interest story, whereas a civil servant may require more factual, clearly sourced information.
  Be specific - think about a few very specific changes that you would like to see, and develop some key messages that can be delivered simply and effectively.
  Try to focus on solutions. *Propose* something that decision makers have to *oppose*.

- **Consider potential allies / stakeholders**
  Alliances can be very effective especially if they are cross sector and/or unexpected.
  Which other groups are affected by your issue?
  Who may have an interest in this? Political allies can be useful, look at politicans' areas of interest.

- **Consider potential opposition to your campaign and any obstacles**
  Who may oppose your campaign – can you work with them from the start to alleviate concerns? If not, can you anticipate their concerns and be prepared to respond?
  Be aware of the external environment and how political changes may affect your campaign.

- **Develop a plan of activities with timescales**
  What are you actually going to do? There are a whole host of campaign techniques select the ones that are right for you given your capacity, your issue, your audience and your aims. Campaigning and lobbying techniques are the subject of a separate information sheet but it is worth remembering that the techniques can broadly be categorised according to whether you intend to run an "insider" or "outsider" campaign. An insider campaign is where you would use established channels (low-key meetings etc) to lobby your target. An outsider campaign is a more oppositional approach based on fighting to have your voice heard by mobilising public support for change.

- **Consider how you will deliver your campaign messages and gather support**
  How do you plan to use the media, if at all?
  Could you develop an e-campaign? How could you use the internet?
  Are you producing publicity / reports and if so what are you going to do with them?
  How will you launch the campaign?

- **Monitor progress and evaluate**
  What would success look like?
  Take time to reflect and evaluate and adapt the campaign if necessary.
  Try to monitor where your campaigning has had an effect e.g. if you send a briefing to Assembly. Members check to see if they quoted it or used it.
  Celebrate all successes but remember that change can take a very long time.

Further information

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.wcva.org.uk

Charity Commission Website:
www.charity-commission.gov.uk/

National Council for Voluntary Organisations Campaigning Effectiveness Team:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigningeffectiveness/index.asp

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For further information contact

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