

Advocacy: It's a way of thinking

You are not entitled to the money!

- ⇒ Funders need information to make decisions
- ⇒ Funding needs to be sustainable
- ⇒ You need to know who you are competing with—and explain why your cause is important
- ⇒ How will giving you money help funders achieve their goals?

Change happens fast

- ⇒ Create a briefing book with information about the library in order to respond quickly to issues
- ⇒ Start advocacy efforts before the crisis occurs
- ⇒ Try to predict what could change; and have strategies ready
- ⇒ Coordinate with your regional library and libraries in your area — common messaging is important

Advocacy is an area where board members and staff may feel unprepared. The need to ensure that MLAs have the right information to make decisions about libraries is crucial. The purpose of advocacy is not to create library users, but library supporters.

Follow the money

- ⇒ Understand your funding
- ⇒ What would be the impact of a cut in funding?
- ⇒ What is the financial impact of other services you use, but may not directly pay for (i.e. government courier)?
- ⇒ What other funding supports your library? What does it pay for?
- ⇒ What if that source of funding is cut?

How does your library add value?

- ⇒ To the province, to your community, to individuals?
- ⇒ Which of these outcomes do funders care about?
- ⇒ This is about outcomes, not inputs and outputs (i.e. what change happens when children attend summer programs, not how many children attend summer programs)
- ⇒ Do you have an elevator speech ready?

What are the funders' priorities?

- ⇒ How do you know? Try to focus on the top three.
- ⇒ What does the library do that aligns with these priorities?
- ⇒ Who is championing these issues? Who do you have to convince?
- ⇒ What is the "Alberta" message?

The Speech from the Throne

- ⇒ What does the Speech from the Throne tell you about the future?
- ⇒ What was highlighted?
- ⇒ What wasn't highlighted?

Develop relationships

- ⇒ Who can you work with?
- ⇒ Who will be damaged if you are successful?
- ⇒ Do not compete with, or contradict, other libraries
- ⇒ What is ALTA's role? What is LAA's role? What about AALT? TAL?
- ⇒ How do academic libraries support you?

Don't assume malice

- ⇒ Assume lack of information
- ⇒ What do funders need to know in order to make good decisions for libraries?
- ⇒ Have you congratulated your MLA and invited them for a tour? What about your municipal councillors?
- ⇒ Stage the tours. What do those people like? What interests them?
- ⇒ If you are using technology make sure it works, and you understand how to use it, and explain it.
- ⇒ Government is not the enemy

Find your champions

- ⇒ Who are they?
- ⇒ How do you know?
- ⇒ Where do people gather to discuss local issues?
- ⇒ How do connections work in your local area
- ⇒ Ask for help
- ⇒ Champions may not be library users

The common message

- ⇒ The Rule of Three
- ⇒ "We need more money" is not a message
- ⇒ Conclude with "How can we help the government/council meet its goals?"
- ⇒ Be prepared to answer questions such as:
 - Why are there so many libraries in this community?
 - Isn't everything free?
 - Who needs libraries now that we have the internet?
 - How do libraries in Alberta help the government to meet its goals in a cost-effective way?
 - How do the benefits of libraries outweigh the costs?

Like speaks to like

- ⇒ Elected officials (trustees) speak to elected officials (MLAs and Councilors)
- ⇒ Employees (library staff) speak to employees (provincial and municipal staff)
- ⇒ Government departments speak to government departments

Selected Resources:

Elevator speech: <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/files/163926.pdf>

Speech from the Throne: <https://www.alberta.ca/throne-speech.aspx>

ALTA Advocacy Handbook: <https://www.librarytrustees.ab.ca/documents/advocacy/Advocacy-Booklet.pdf>

LAA Advocacy Information: <https://www.laa.ca/page/advocacy.aspx#.XOXlq8hKgdU>

Rural Municipalities of Alberta: <https://rmaalberta.com/advocacy/>

Developing champions: <https://www.healthynewbornnetwork.org/blog/working-advocacy-champions-can-accelerate-change/>