



10 Advocacy: Engaging the Public

Tips: Building and Sustaining Relationships

Building and sustaining relationships is the key to successfully engaging your community. There are no shortcuts, but the ideas that follow might help you get off to a solid start.

Think strategically

Remember relationships are an investment of both time and energy. You cannot build and sustain effective relationships with the entire community. Choose your potential allies wisely!

Make time, ask questions, and listen

Build time in your schedule to meet individually with potential allies. Ask them questions about themselves, and listen to what they tell you! In other words, really get to know the people that you hope will eventually be avid supporters.

Be persistent

Relationships are not built overnight. Building and sustaining effective relationships will take time over many months-or even years! If you do not connect with someone the first time, be persistent! Prioritize time the following month to pay them another visit.

Communicate regularly

Building relationships can be challenging, but it's nothing compared to sustaining them. Don't let potential allies slip away from you-keep in touch! Prioritize time to make a telephone call to solicit feedback, drop-in occasionally, and/or find time to "do lunch." Receiving a monthly newsletter, in addition to personal contact, will also support the relationships you have built.



Identify small, short-term projects of mutual interest

Planning is an important part of every initiative. However, the sustained involvement of community members will depend heavily on your ability to offer opportunities for action and small wins! Keep individuals that you have developed strong relationships with in mind as project needs arise that might interest them.

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