

ADVOCACY:

It's a way of thinking

Punch Jackson

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Advocacy is an area where both board members and staff may feel unprepared. With a change in the provincial government, the need to ensure that MLAs have the right information for making decisions about libraries is crucial. This webinar will introduce you to a helpful way to think about advocacy, and to approach your local decision makers.

1. You're not entitled to the money

- Advocacy is about making sure that funders have the correct information when they make decisions about library funding.
- You need to know who you are competing with for the money.
- You need to be able to explain why your cause is more important than theirs
- How will giving you money help the funders to meet their goals?

Funding must be sustainable

- https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/sites/default/files/2018-12/cfib_alberta_municipal_spending_watch_report_2018.pdf
- Alberta Municipal Spending Watch Report

2. Change happens fast

- Your library should have a briefing book with information about the library in order to respond quickly to issues as they arise.
- The time to start advocacy is before the crisis occurs.
- Do your homework and try to predict change.

Wheatland County

- <https://strathmoretimes.com/2019/dismay-as-wheatland-county-council-votes-to-withhold-library-funding/>

Does your library have as strategy to respond to a situation like this?

Is it coordinated with your system (if you are a system member)?

3. Follow the money

- Make sure you understand your funding and any conditions attached to it.
- What is the financial impact of the government courier on your library? What about the ILL software?
- What would be the impact of a cut?

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Do you understand all of the funding that supports your library:

- Municipal
- Regional
- Other grants

What does each amount of money pay for? What would happen if one was reduced?

Do you know how to answer the question of user-pay?

http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/lcvss/library_bylaws_RSA_2000_QtoAsk.pdf

4. How does your library add value?

- To the province, to your community, to individuals?
- Which of these outcomes do the funders care about?
- This is about outcomes, not inputs or outputs (i.e. what change happens when kids attend summer reading programs, not how many kids attend)

Elevator speech

- <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/files/163926.pdf>
- absolutely not longer than 25 to 30 seconds
- or - in words - approximately 80 to 90 words
- or - in sentences - 8 tot 10 sentences

5. 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? (ie. Who do you have to convince?)
- What is the “Alberta” message?

The Speech from the Throne

- <https://www.alberta.ca/throne-speech.aspx>
- What does the Speech from the Throne tell you about the future?
- “Ensure high-quality and effective frontline services to support all Albertans..”
- ...*are libraries a high-quality front-line service?*

- “Restore and expand the educational choices available for parents and students”
 - *How do your library’s programs fit into this goal?*
- “Make it easier for newcomers to be credentialed in their professions”
 - *Does your library provide services for newcomers that support their professional goals?*

6. Develop relationships

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

Friends and relations

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/>

7. 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 councilors?
- Stage the tours...what do those people like? What interests them?
- Government is not the enemy.

What have funders said?

Best Practices for Public Libraries in Alberta

http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/libraries/Best_Practices_2018_page_nums_fix.pdf

Don't forget the role of the federal government:

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/services/national-union-catalogue/Pages/national-union-catalogue.aspx>

8. The common message

- The Rule of Three
- “We need more money” is not a message
- “How can we help the government/council meet its goals?” is always the conclusion.
- 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?

The common message question

- 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?

Value calculator

<http://www.olsn.ca/en/resources/valuing-northern-libraries-toolkit>

If you calculate the value of libraries, or your library, be sure that you are able to clearly explain the assumptions and decisions behind the calculations if you want to be convincing.

9. Find your champions

- Who are they and how do you know?
- Who do they know?
- How do local connections work in your community (coffee shop? Rotary? Church?)
- Ask for help.

Developing champions

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

10. 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.

Questions?

- You can send your questions to us at advocacy@thealbertalibrary.ab.ca and we will answer them.