



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

Advocating at the Local Level – A Toolkit Building and Maintaining Relationships

What is advocacy? It is defined in many different ways, but the BCLTA uses the following definition, as provided in the TOP Manual: “...a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time.”

Advocacy is an important responsibility of library trustees. The BCLTA, representing the collective voice of public library trustees, does advocacy at the provincial level (mainly to the Ministry of Education). The BCLTA often does this work in conjunction with our partner library organizations.

Trustees’ advocacy is focused at the local level, and is about building relationships and educating people (especially local governments) to ensure their continued support. The BCLTA’s role is to assist trustees to be effective advocates in their communities.

This Advocacy Toolkit is designed to provide ideas on how to do local advocacy, and with whom. It doesn’t have to be onerous; trustee boards can choose one or two (or more!) approaches, depending on their needs.

In addition to the Toolkit, the BCLTA website provides links to other organizations such as the Canadian Library Association and its Library Advocacy Now training program and workbook.

Direct advocacy to elected officials is crucial, as they provide 80 percent of library funding provincially. However, ensuring public support and knowledge, especially among opinion leaders, is also important to ensure the decision-makers know how much the community values the library.

The following Toolkit is in two parts. The first focus is on elected officials, and in particular local government and First Nations funders. The second focus is on non-elected community leaders; these influential people can be invaluable champions for the local library.

The Toolkit also provides brief information about social media, and how you might use them in your advocacy work.

BCLTA hopes you find this Toolkit useful, and would love to hear any and all feedback from you. Simply email admin@bclta.ca.

Good luck and have fun engaging your community leaders.

FOCUS #1: Elected Officials (EOs)

This focus includes mayors, councillors, regional district directors and First Nations representing jurisdictions that contribute to the library service.

This focus might also include senior management staff (CAO, CFO, appropriate managers), although the BCLTA believes this may best be handled by the Library Director (LD) in a staff-to-staff relationship. If appropriate, advocacy efforts could also include the board of education, parks boards and other elected boards.

Goals:

1. express appreciation for support
2. ensure continued (or increasing) financial and other support – for ongoing operations, special projects, emergency situations
3. increase their understanding of the library world and the local library
4. generate excitement re: new roles for libraries, new opportunities
5. increase knowledge of provincial library issues, and build allies for provincial lobbying, and/or
6. build awareness of the role and work of library trustees and the BCLTA

Method/ Activity	Who	Tools/Resources/Strategies
Advocacy Plan	Library board/committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ template in development by BCLTA, including suggested do's and don't's ▪ other resources available on BCLTA website, including sample advocacy plans ▪ some libraries choose not to do a full-blown plan and simply plan activities to support identified needs
Buddies	Individual trustees – each assigned to a local EO and potentially Parks Board, School Board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ periodic communications: phone call, coffee/tea ▪ general updates which could include newsletters, stories, statistics and LD (bi)monthly summaries – all tailored, where possible, to buddy's interests ▪ fact sheets on a particular timely issue (prepared by LD) ▪ identification of opportunities to work together ▪ BCLTA newsletters to identify provincial issues/initiatives
Inform & Engage Council/RD EOs	Library board, chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ submit library board minutes for municipal/RD public agenda (received as information item) ▪ EO liaison reports verbally at council/board meetings ▪ circulate excerpts of LD report – summary of activities, stats ▪ circulate stories, videos from other libraries. ▪ circulate BCLTA FAQs, key events/announcements ▪ encourage that LD be a part of the management team for city/RD

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ annual presentation during preparation of financial plan ▪ create experiential events at the library for EOs: special open house; one-on-one tours: invitations to read to children, or to speak to adults (encourage democratic literacy); photo opps. Make their support really visible.
Third party endorsements	Identified library champions/board chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist them to communicate their meaningful stories and/or experiences to EOs.
Social Media to connect with EOs and champions.	Library board, chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Youtube to have two-way conversations with your EOs or library champions to find out what interests them and to tell them what's happening at the library in their areas of interest. ▪ Facebook – use your account to follow your EO or have them follow you, or to show you like your own library's FB messages telling about library programs for example. ▪ Instagram (photo sharing) – create an account to start following other users or have users (EOs and library champions) follow you. Post interesting photos of your library, library events, patrons (with permission), etc. ▪ Twitter (140 character max) – create an account to start following other users (such as EOs) and have them follow you. Post (tweet) or repost (retweet) your library accounts' tweets or others of interest. Suggested accounts to follow: @BCLTA, @MyBCLibrary (BC Libraries Branch, Min. of Education), @CdnLibrary News; @BookNet_Canada (book industry news). Also other libraries, such as @VPL or @surreylibrary. ▪ Youtube – post a video of something great happening at your library: an event, a program, etc. and then share it with EOs, other trustees and library champions through an email link, or your Facebook or Twitter accounts.

LD-library director

EO – elected official

NOTE: this approach will work for public libraries and library associations, and will need to be adapted for regional library services (where all trustees are EO's) and for hybrids (like Greater Victoria which is a mix of elected and non-elected).

FOCUS #2: Community Leaders (non-elected)

Goals:

1. identify and communicate how libraries support their goals/interests, and how they can support libraries (donations, in-kind assistance, lobbying local gov't, etc.)
2. create understanding and excitement about new roles of libraries
3. find champions to create visible and broad community support

Sector	Rationale/Messages	Tools/Resources/Strategies
Economic/business sector – Chamber of Commerce, business associations, economic development organizations, etc.	<p>Libraries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ are key community amenities that attract residents, investors, workers ▪ provide resources for job searches, preparation of resumes, etc. ▪ provide business and economic information (e.g., online databases?) ▪ bring regional shoppers to town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ annual presentations ▪ regular communications via newsletters, notices, news, FAQs, etc. ▪ invitations to special events and open houses, or to read to children ▪ public acknowledgement of support, thank you notes
Social Sector – service clubs, social service NGOs, churches, schools, provincial agencies, childcare providers, police, multicultural groups	<p>Libraries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ help build community health ▪ provide a warm, accepting place for marginalized people (mental illness, addictions, poverty, homeless, etc.) ▪ provide a safe place for youth ▪ encourage early literacy, and lifelong learning ▪ assist with job readiness and preparation ▪ break social isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presentations, as invited ▪ regular communications via newsletters, notices, news, FAQs, etc. ▪ invitations to special events and open houses, or to read to children, or to be present at library with an information table ▪ public acknowledgement of support, thank you notes ▪ partnership opportunities (e.g., training to assist libraries with EDPs and other challenging clients.)
Environmental Sector– NGOs, student groups	<p>Libraries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide information on environmental issues, and resources to address them ▪ demonstrate green values - - through sharing! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presentations, as invited ▪ invitations to special events and open houses, or to read to children, or to be present at library with an information table ▪ partnership opportunities (e.g., Earth Day, Car-free Day, etc)

<p>Cultural Sector – arts councils, cultural staff, venues (for profit and not-for-profit), guilds, societies</p>	<p>Libraries provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ resources for artists ▪ venues for events, presentations, exhibits ▪ quiet work space ▪ development of cultural literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage use of library for cultural events ▪ presentations, as invited ▪ invitations to special events, to participate where possible, or to be present at library with an information table
<p>Non-aligned, key opinion leader – converted to Active Champion</p>	<p>Identify how their values, goals and interests align with libraries. Recruit them as champions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ build relationships – frequent communications, invite for tea/coffee ▪ invite to special events ▪ find ways to have their support made public – either directly (them speaking) or indirectly (quoting them)
<p>Media – online, print, broadcast</p>	<p>Libraries support literacy, reading and community engagement – share those common interests with media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify a champion in each media – feed them stories, tips, photos, special invitations and events. ▪ offer a regular library column
<p>Virtual World</p>	<p>Tell the world that libraries are alive and thriving. They're busy places with lots to offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify people of interest to follow through your social media accounts and then let people follow you. Feed them stories, tips, photos, special invitations and events through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. ▪ e.g., tell the media and local government about your upcoming library event through Twitter or Facebook. ▪ e.g., tell the media and the public about your past library event through photos on Facebook or Instagram, or through a video on Youtube.