

TIP SHEET

How to build an advocacy network

Advocacy is getting people who have good opinions of your library to speak to others on its behalf, and to convince others of your library's value. Here are a few tips for building an advocacy network in your community.

1 Recruit people who support your library

Develop a roster of key community influencers who have had past positive relationships with the library. Recruit individuals of the library board, Friends of the Library, staff, patrons and volunteers. Appoint a coordinator and assign tasks.

2 Be enthusiastic and positive

When you invite others to join your network, let them know that they can make a difference.

3 Highlight specific needs

Think from the perspective of your community. Do your patrons need more eBooks? Do your children need more space (or shelving)? Does your business community need more subscriptions? Talk about these needs and what the library must do in order to address them.

4 Build your case with facts

You will need statistics, reports, and other facts to support your case. You can make it easier for people to share facts by posting documents to a page on your library's website, or by publishing them using an online program like Scribd.

5 Develop a set of key messages

Working together, decide what messages you want to share with decision makers. Key messages are short statements about your library that are easy to remember. They provide straightforward, clearly worded information that enhances relationships and gets decision makers motivated to become involved. For example:

"Libraries play a significant role in enhancing the quality of life to a community."

"Studies show that for every dollar invested in libraries, communities receive over \$6 in economic benefit."

6 Meet with key decision makers

Involve your network to schedule meetings with key decision-makers. Decision makers might include your mayor, town and county council members, or owners of influential businesses serving your area. At each meeting, demonstrate to them the value of the library.

7 Break tasks into manageable pieces

People bring different strengths, interests, and schedules. For example, some people might be skilled at writing letters, others at public speaking, and still others at informal face-to-face meetings. For those who are busy but want to help, provide a list of specific tasks to choose from, such as attending one council meeting or making one phone call.

8 Keep people updated

Write updates on municipal or provincial legislative issues. Include these updates in your library's newsletter. Distribute the newsletter via email to all members of the network.