
So you've got 30 minutes with the minister...now what?

Sharpening your message for maximum impact

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Moderator



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1. What you need to know about Ministers

What motivates Ministers?



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- **Every politician wants to be a hero** – Successful advocates help them advance their priorities and solve problems and obstacles in their path
- **Politicians fall along a spectrum** – Wonks at one end (show me the data), politicians at the other (let's make a deal). Decide which you're dealing with and tailor conversation accordingly.

What motivates Ministers?



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- **Politicians relate to people** – Evidence is important, but should always be paired with compelling stories that put a human face on the issue.
- **Politicians want to say “yes”** – But you need to give them something they can say ‘yes’ to. This means building a strong case and support among internal and external stakeholders *before* you meet the Minister.



Ministers are powerful, but only to a point



Ministers can make policy, program and spending changes that:

- Are **within their mandate** alone (don't involve other ministries/depts.)
- **Align with govt's general direction** to date
- Entail **no new costs**
- Can be **funded through internal reallocation** of \$ (within ministry/dept.)

Anything else needs to be negotiated with others (e.g. other ministries/departments, Finance, office of the Premier/PM) **and, in some cases, approved by Cabinet**



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2. Setting your objectives

What is your target outcome for this meeting?



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- Knowledge sharing?
- A funding commitment?
- Program change?
- Administrative change?
- Policy/regulatory change?
- An agreed on process (e.g. for research, consultation, negotiation)?

**A clear objective
helps determine
what you share and
how you do it**





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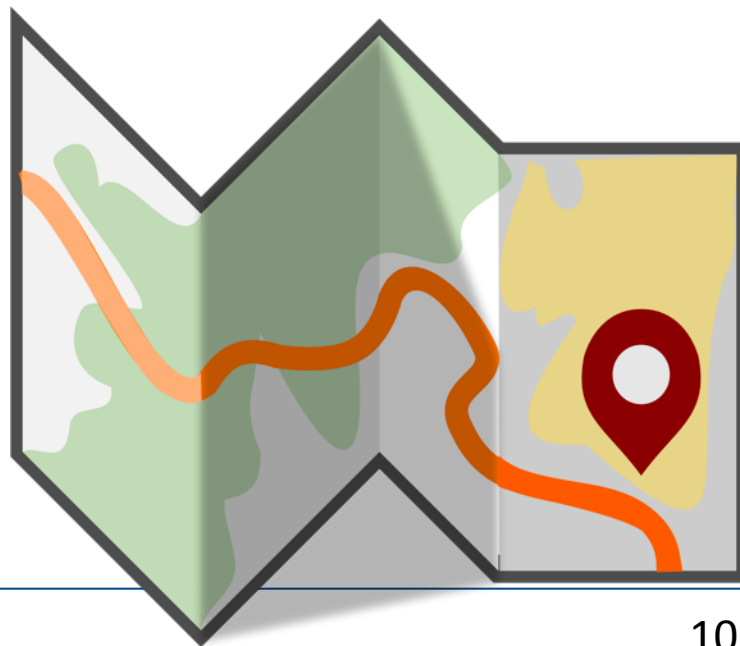
3. Preparation

Mapping the lay of the land



Before the meeting, you should know the following about your 'ask':

- **Fit with political priorities/values** of the Minister/government
- Where there is **common ground** you can build on
- **Benefits** to citizens and to the government



Mapping the lay of the land



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- Associated **costs and risks** for the government
- If **ministry/dept. officials support or oppose** it and why
- If **other relevant stakeholders support or oppose** it and why
- Your **response to potential critiques**



Refine your idea and build support beforehand. Meeting the Minister is the last step in the advocacy process – not the first!

Prepare a 1-2 page briefing note



You may use this in your meeting or a similarly structured PowerPoint, but it is a good leave behind and ensures you have answered all the key questions:

- **Recommendation** – Precise statement of what you are recommending in 1-3 lines
- **Rationale** – Key arguments in favour of recommendation with supporting analysis and facts/data



Prepare a 1-2 page briefing note



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- **Context** – Optional, but sometimes helps to provide historical context (e.g. what's been done to date and why more action is needed) and/or descriptive facts and figures that help to underscore why recommendation is important and necessary
- **Benefits** – Benefits to individuals, relevant stakeholder groups and the government



Prepare a 1-2 page briefing note



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- **Cost** – Total cost over specified time period and who will pay it. Include annual costs if not equally split. Add a high-level budget if relevant and indicate other matching cash/in-kind resources that would be leveraged.
- **Other considerations** – This is a catch-all to address potential impacts and risks the government may be concerned about and how these can be mitigated



If possible, align messaging with officials



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- **‘No surprises’** is the best policy
- **Build a long term relationship with officials** to help ensure commitments outlast individual Ministers and governments
- If you have a friendly working relationship, **share briefing notes with officials beforehand** to get their feedback

If possible, align messaging with officials



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- A **good briefing note may be reproduced, in part, by officials** briefing the Minister and shared with other relevant parties in government
- It also **reduces likelihood of anyone inadvertently mischaracterizing your 'ask'**



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4. The meeting

Great advocacy is built on aspiration, hard evidence and a compelling story



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1. Be positive

- **Use an opportunity frame –**
it is more motivating than focusing on problems
- **Be bold and aspirational –**
it inspires

Great advocacy is built on aspiration, hard evidence and a compelling story



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2. Use evidence to make your case

- **Fact base** – Rigorous and supports your case
- **Comparative data** – Appeal to desire to measure up and be the best
- **Authorities/think tanks** – Use analysis from organizations the government respects
- **Polling** – Data that demonstrates resonance with public

Great advocacy is built on aspiration, hard evidence and a compelling story



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3. Tell stories

- **Human face** – Captures people dimension and engages the emotions
- **Success stories from other jurisdictions** – Build proof of possibility and sense of efficacy

Delivering your 'ask'



Intro

- **Thank the Minister** for seeing you
- **Do introductions** (get card from Minister's staff person for follow-up)
- **Tell them a little bit about your organization(s)**

5 mins.

Ask

- **Verbally present your 'ask'** following the briefing note or a companion powerpoint (bring copies for everyone in the meeting)

10 mins.

Discuss

- **Invite questions and feedback.** Listen and take notes on:
 - What they like
 - What they have concerns about
 - What they need more information on

10 mins.

Wrap-up

- **Discuss next steps.** More information? Follow-up meetings? Further refine the idea and/or build necessary support?
- **Thank everyone for their time and feedback**

5 mins.



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5. Follow-up

Follow-up is critical to ‘keeping your ball in play’



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Follow-up is a necessary next step to:

- **Consolidate** gains
- **Document and hold people accountable** for agreed on actions
- **Signal seriousness** and professionalism
- **Establish a positive rapport** and effective communications
- **Keep your ‘ask’ alive and moving** and prevent it from falling to the bottom of the priority list

Stop and reflect on what you heard



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- Does the Minister **agree that there is a problem/opportunity?**
- Do they **agree on what it is?**
- Do they **think its important?**
- Do they **agree with your recommended course of action?**
- If not, **why not?**
- **Do you need to explore these questions** more?
- **Do you need to do more research or consultation** - On the issue? The solution?
- **How do you plan to do this?**

...but it can be a long and winding road



Follow-up can be quick but is more often a longer process with twists and turns along the way. Start by:

- **Debriefing on the meeting** and decide how to proceed
- **Sending an email within 24 hours** to political/civil service staff to:
 - **Thank them** for a productive meeting
 - **Document items of agreement, feedback, and follow up actions** with individuals responsible and agreed on timelines
 - **If appropriate, suggest a future check-in** (email or meeting) to see how things are progressing. If you're not clear on who to follow up with, ask them to advise.

...but it can be a long and winding road



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- **Identifying steps you need to take** to further refine your recommendation and/or build support.
- **Developing an action plan** with designated leads and timelines and periodic check-ins if necessary.





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6. Conclusion

Relationship building is critical



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Few 'asks' are successful right out of the gate.

Most require a longer, iterative process of engagement.

When done right, this builds mutual understanding, trust and support that make future 'asks' much easier.

Relationship building is critical



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Success is enhanced when you:

1. Link to the government's priorities
2. Frame your 'ask' in language they can embrace
3. Listen to feedback, learn and adapt
4. Acknowledge tradeoffs/issues and help to work through them
5. Focus on building a long term relationship with civil servants and political level
6. Acknowledge and publicly recognize progress

Resources

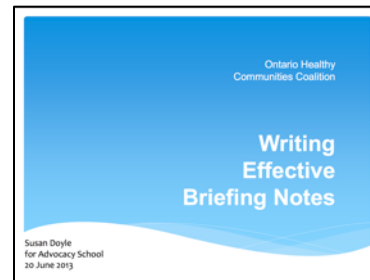


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- **S. Doyle. Writing Effective Briefing Notes. 2013.**

<https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Writing-effective-brfg-nts-S-Doyle.pdf>



- **Sample briefing note - CAROW**

<https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Briefing-Note-CAROW.pdf>



Canadian Association of
Women's Criminal Justice
Residential Options



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Thank you!

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Next Webinar



Collaborating for change in today's political environment

July 12, 2018
