

Chambers for
Sustainability
Coalition

Toolkit On
**Lobbying as a
Chamber**

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Part 1:

Introduction

Why Should Your Chamber Lobby?

Impact

From an impact perspective, lobbying and legislative work is the most important action that a chamber of commerce can take to promote environmental sustainability in business.



Business

As business networks, chambers have a unique power to promote policies that will produce circular economies, reduce waste, and achieve net-zero emissions.



Community

As spokespeople for communities, chambers can advocate meaningfully for sustainability, conservation, and corporate social responsibility.



What Makes Lobbying the Most Impactful?

Cooperation

Keep your members in the loop! Lobbying is most effective when it incorporates the opinions of the group on whose behalf it is carried out. This makes the cooperation of your members crucial.

Data

It is pertinent that lobbying is based on factual information with vast amounts of research to back up its objectives. This is where clear, specific objectives based on research are important.

Planning

As a chamber, you must carefully plan how you will lobby, and what steps must be taken.



Part 2:

Direct vs Indirect Lobbying

Direct Lobbying: Defined

Page Source:
<https://govrelations.duke.edu/ethics-and-compliance/lobbying-definitions-exceptions-and-examples>



There are many ways a chamber can directly lobby. These include: candidate forums, lobby days, conferences, or general meetings that inform and influence legislative actors on a topic.

Over time, direct lobbying can take the form of providing expert consultation to legislative actors.

Indirect Lobbying: Defined

Page Source:
<https://govrelations.duke.edu/ethics-and-compliance/lobbying-definitions-exceptions-and-examples>



The second way that you as a chamber can take legislative action is through grassroots or indirect lobbying. This will usually take the form of a campaign to influence public opinion which in turn will influence legislators' opinion.

In order to take this form of action, a chamber will usually educate the public on an issue, promote a particular view of that issue, and urge the public to make contact with legislative actors.



Part 3:

Initial Steps: Indirect and Direct Lobbying

Initial Steps for Direct and Indirect Lobbying: Checklist

Narrow Down

Decide on a specific issue and solution that your lobbying will focus on.

Contact

Get in contact with your chamber members and ask for feedback. Contact other chambers with sustainability objectives and ask for help.

Budget

Create a budget. Take into account your expectations and priorities.

Information

Gather relevant data on the issue at hand. This will be vastly important during your advocacy efforts.



Narrow Down

Legislative action becomes less effective as it becomes more broad.

In order to create change, you as a chamber must have a narrow idea of an issue that needs to be solved, as well as a clear idea of what legislators should do about it.



Budget

A detailed budget is essential for legislative advocacy.

Not only will a budget allow you as a chamber to examine the priority levels of different actions, it also allows you to inform your chamber members of the expected cost of your advocacy. If funds need to be raised, this is the time. This is also an opportunity to decide on your expectations for your lobbying efforts.



Contact

Consulting with chamber members before advocacy actions is important to keep a united front. If your lobbying actions are already in line with the stated intentions of your chamber, this step can be carried out with a newsletter or normal correspondence. If sustainability advocacy is a new topic for you as a chamber, then it would be best to hold a meeting to hear input from members.

If you have ties with other chambers with similar sustainability intentions, this would be a good time to make them aware of your lobbying efforts. This allows them to provide support.



Information

Gathering relevant data on the issue at hand will be important for a successful advocacy effort.

For direct lobbying, this research will be vital for packets and information distribution. For indirect lobbying, this information will be important for formulating a comprehensive argument to the public.



Part 4:

Direct Lobbying: Next Steps

Direct Lobbying: Checklist

Format and Location

Staging and format is important for direct lobbying.

Packets and Materials

Create an information packet that will be distributed to guests.

Transport and Food

If you expect candidates and legislators to spend time at your forum, this is necessary.

Volunteers

Training and organizing volunteers will be vital for your lobby day.

Appointments

Create a process to make later appointments with legislators.

Correspondence

After your direct lobbying effort, update your chamber members and send thank you letters to participants.

Format and Location

Most initial direct lobbying takes the form of a lobby day or candidate forum. A green candidate forum would include political actors that already hold a stance relating back to green business. hosting a forum requires you to invite these actors to speak and take questions.

Staging is important for direct lobbying. There are many considerations to be made as a chamber, including transportation, convenience for your legislative actor guests, and a meeting space.



Transport and Food

If you expect candidates and legislators to spend sizable amounts of time at your forum, it is necessary to arrange lunch or snacks to keep everyone in the same space so appointments can be made for further consultation.

In addition, transportation is necessary for a forum day to provide convenient access to the forum location. If you are holding a private meeting with a legislator, transportation will be necessary for your volunteers or members to meet wherever is convenient.



Appointments

One of the most important things you can do as a chamber is create a process to make regular appointments with the legislator you are working with. Appointments are vital to creating a relationship with the legislator as it is unlikely that you will get a chance to consult on any issue without one.

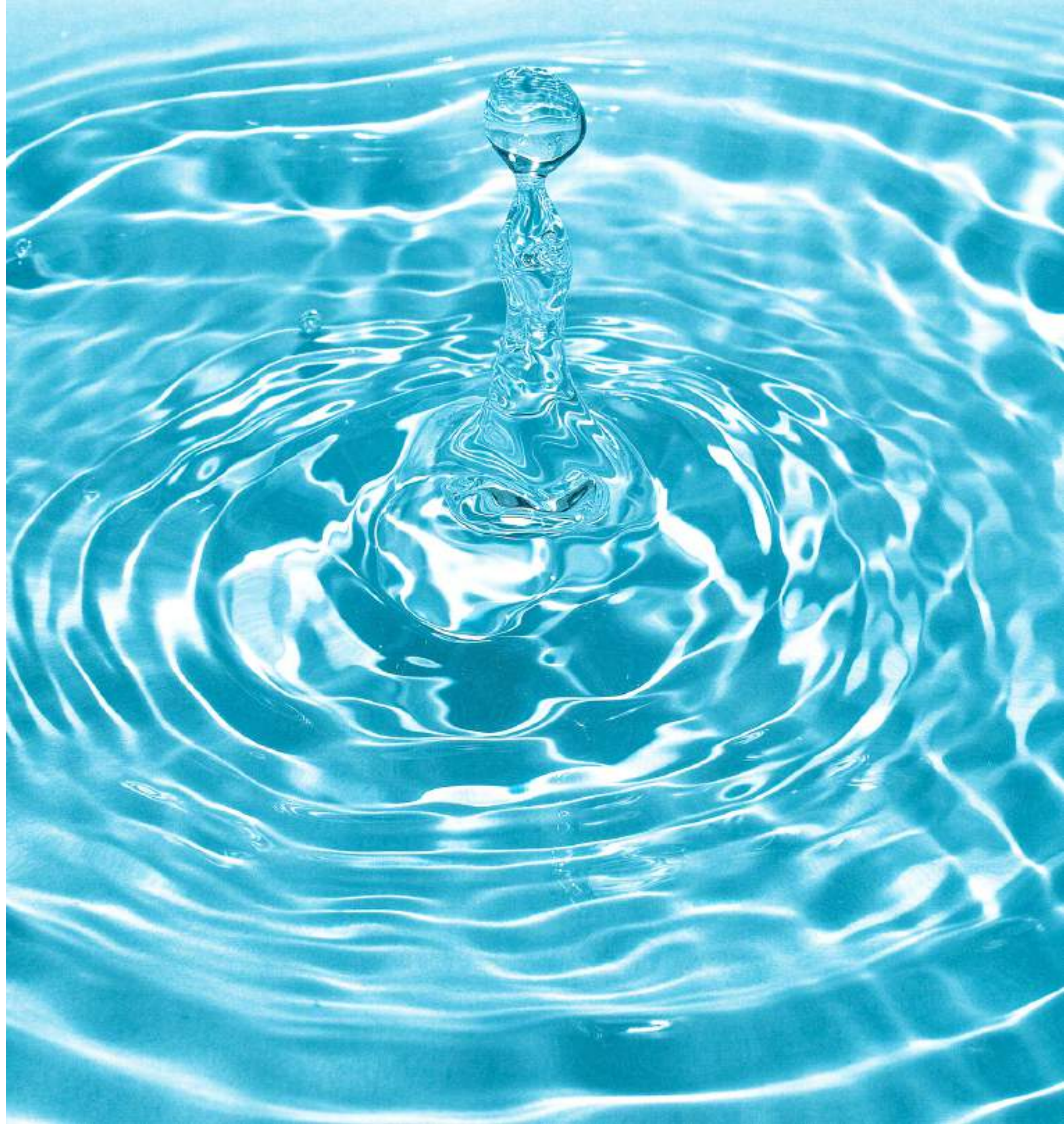
Regular meetings are also a good way to provide more in-depth information about a broader set of sustainability issues.



Packets and Materials

An information packet is what you will be distributing to all of your forum guests. This packet should include logistical information such as an agenda, map, follow-up form, and evaluation form.

It should also include content such as a letter from your chamber CEO/Director about sustainability in business, educational information about your environmental issue of choice, and relevant facts and information.



Volunteers

Volunteers will be very important for your forum or lobby day. Some roles that need to be filled include: food handling, sign in duties, general guidance of guests, introductions, packet distribution, and the manning of tables for information and appointment making.

For simpler duties, volunteers can be informed of their jobs remotely beforehand and trained several hours before the forum begins. These volunteers will also be responsible for set-up and clean-up of the forum or lobby day.



Correspondence

It is important to send a thank-you letter to everyone who participated in your event. This includes speakers, green candidates, any political actors, and volunteers. This letter should be sent on behalf of the organization and signed by your CEO or Director.

Write an article for your newsletter or write letters directly to your member organizations informing them of your event and its results. This is an important step, particularly if you hope to take on more advocacy in the future.





Part 5:

Indirect Lobbying: Next Steps

Indirect Lobbying: Checklist

Timeline

It is important to determine a timeline in which you will meet your narrow issue goal.

Media Plan

Create a media plan that takes into account the most popular form of media for your intended audience.

Responsibility

It is vital to allocate responsibilities to different team members.

Communicate

Reach out to your members and other chambers.

Identify Target

Know specific names of legislators and bills that you want to promote or change.

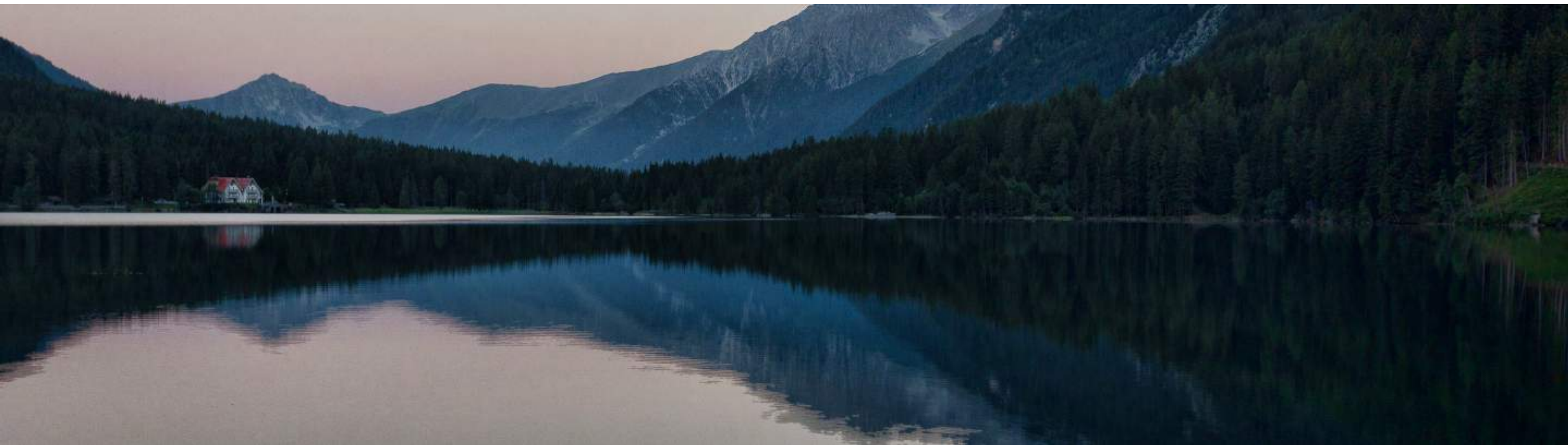
Maintain Momentum

Maintaining momentum is how you can keep your lobbying consistent and stable.

Timeline

Indirect lobbying can take a very long and different path than direct lobbying. It is important to determine an appropriate timeline based on your narrow issue goal (one piece of legislation you want to lobby for or against).

This will also help you more closely monitor the progress of your campaign.



Responsibility

For a long-term project with a budget and timeline, it is vital to assign specific tasks to different members of your team. This can include members of your organization who oversee projects, as well as interns or volunteers that support your campaign through avenues like social media content creation.



Identify Target

In order to successfully perform indirect lobbying, it is important to not only know the what and why of your campaign, but also the who. This means knowing a specific audience that you believe can influence a specific legislator and bill. Make sure to notify the audience of who the legislator is and how they can get in touch with them.



Media Plan

This is one of the most important parts of carrying out your campaign. Your media plan should take into account the most popular forms of media for your intended audience. For example, if you wish to mobilize a younger audience to get in contact with an elected official, social media frequented by younger individuals, such as Instagram or TikTok, is a good place to start.

On the other hand, if you wish to get in contact with an older audience, more traditional media such as major newspapers, television, and radio stations could be more appropriate. If you are trying to reach a very niche audience, then finding media related to that targeted group is important.



Communicate

In order to propel the influence that your lobbying can have, it's important to continue communicating with other chambers or organizations that have been reached out to. These groups can help propel your cause on social media, provide support, or create content.



Maintain Momentum

As important as steps 1-5 are for indirect lobbying, the most important goal is to maintain momentum. This can translate into gaining more involvement from your chamber members, gaining involvement from your audience, and involving political actors.

Maintaining momentum from a media standpoint requires consistency, whether that be through social media posts, interviews, or article publishing.



Successful examples

The North Florida Green Chamber has advocated for green policies in its community for years.

You don't need to be an official "green" chamber to advocate though. The San Francisco Chamber includes advocating for a clean economy among its top legislative priorities.

In a recent success, the South Carolina Small Business Chamber advocated against offshore drilling by filing a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Commerce



Disclaimer:

Lobbying rules and regulations differ in every state. Be sure to look at your states laws surrounding advocacy and filing requirements before engaging in any lobbying efforts.

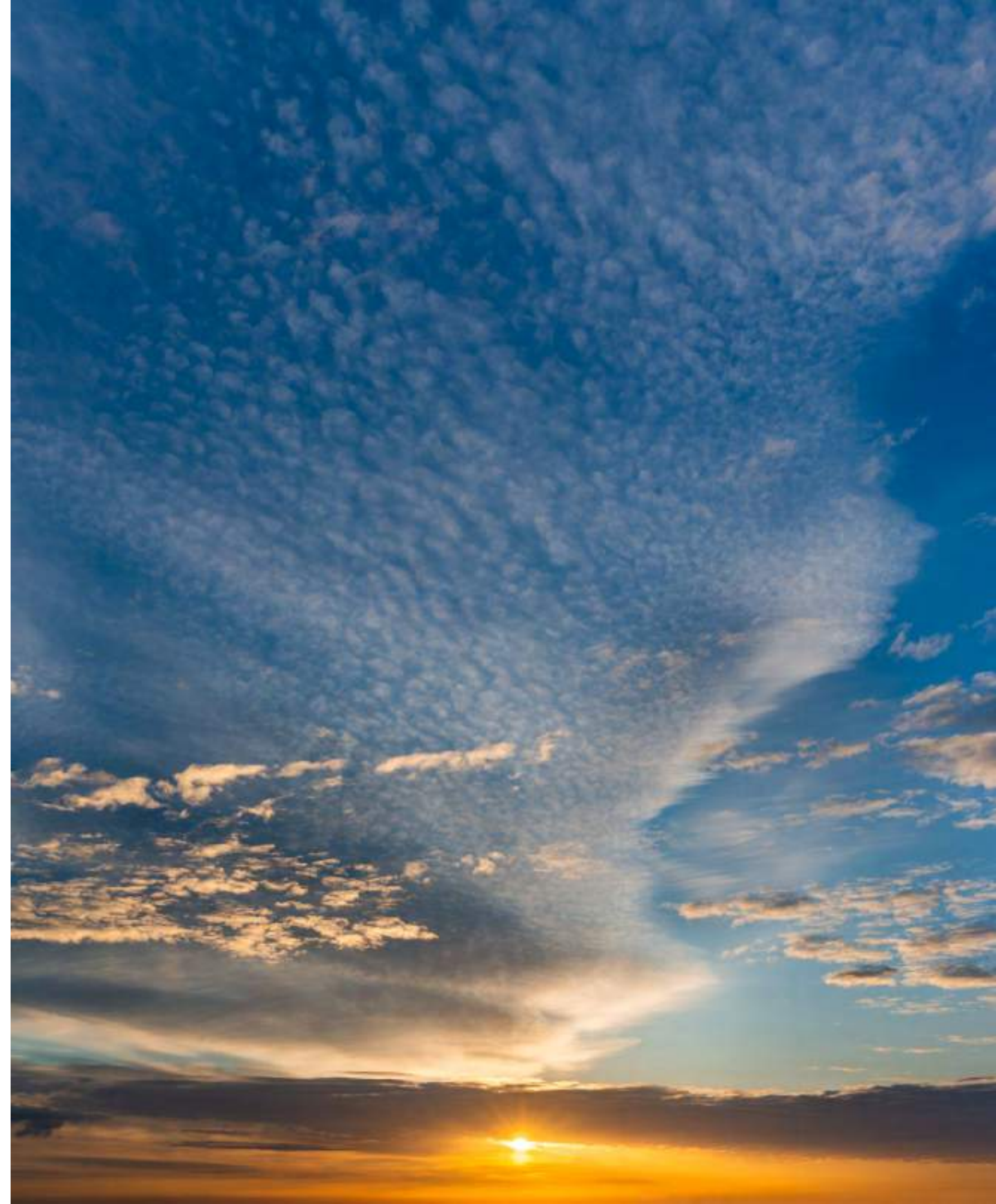
Some info about different state requirements can be found on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#)



Conclusion

There are many ways to lobby. While it might seem daunting to attempt to influence local policy in this way, lobbying is the most impactful thing a chamber can do to make its business community more sustainable.

Historically, many chambers have lobbied against sustainable progress and for deregulation that has increased emissions and amplified the climate crisis. Now, chambers must switch this course and lobby for the policies that will bring their communities through this crisis.



Additional Resources

*Developing and
Sustaining an
Effective Lobbying
Campaign*

<http://www1.wfh.org/publication/files/pdf-1255.pdf>

Lobby Day Toolkit

<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=--pBgNuwBVg%3D&portalid=0>

*Lobbying Definitions,
Exceptions, and
Examples*

<https://govrelations.duke.edu/ethics-and-compliance/lobbying-definitions-exceptions-and-examples>

If you are interested in working with chambers who are lobbying for our future, consider joining the "Chambers for Sustainability Coalition."

Email
info@usgreenchamber for
more information.



Together, We Are Stronger



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