Advocacy: Proactive Policy

Goals:
Skills to help you build relationships with electeds to make a positive difference for your market and your community

Resources to help you be an effective advocate by knowing who and how to talk about your issues
What is advocacy?

Working to influence public policy to create systemic or institutional change

In other words:

Speaking up on an issue you care about
How do relationships affect advocacy?

When you are trying to make policy changes, electeds want to understand your issues – so they need to know you. They also need to know they can trust you – and that takes building a relationship with them.

Everyone needs friends – invite partners to join your effort & show you’re not alone
9 questions to help you shape your advocacy effort:

1. Why is your market important?
2. What is the vision for your market?
3. What are the goals?
4. What are the goals of your local government?
5. Who shares your vision?
6. What do you need help with?
7. Are you getting the support you need?
8. Why aren’t you getting the support you need?
9. What can you do to be more successful?
4 questions in the legislative process:

1. Is this good policy?
2. Can we afford it?
3. Is it a priority?
4. Is there popular support?

Each of these questions has a *political* answer.
You have an issue – now what’s your plan?

You need friends to help your issue succeed: legislative champion(s) and community allies. The most effective advocacy is when your goal is shared and many voices speak up. Build alliances with others who share your vision – especially those with different perspectives on that same vision. “Unusual suspects” get attention.
How to build relationships with lawmakers:

**Time:** Electeds get countless invitations, see hundreds (if not thousands) of constituents, cover many issue areas, etc. Building a relationship with them takes time.
Building relationships with lawmakers:

**Timing:** It’s important that electeds hear from you year round – not just at budget hearings or during legislative session when you want something from them.

Think beyond political seasons and farmers market season: think year round!
Building relationships with lawmakers:

**Site Visits:** Invite lawmakers to your market, a local farm: anywhere that shows them your work and impact on your community.

Planning for a site visit is CRITICAL
Planning Site Visits:

Think ahead about what you want a lawmaker to see, understand, and really know about your market – and plan accordingly.

• Plan a quiet place to sit down at some point – it’s easier to have a conversation together.
• Invite a few key vendors and (known) shoppers to join so they can tell their own story about the issues at hand.
• Invite community partners to be part of your site visit to demonstrate your community connections. Your local food bank, WIC agency, Extension staff, Chamber of Commerce, etc. could all be good voices for the issues and stories you want them to know about.
Lobby Days:

Lobby days are a great way to start in Olympia - or DC.

Lobby days are organized by an issue (e.g. Hunger Action Day or Food & Farming Day) or an organization (WA’s PTA or United Way)

Lobby days typically involve some training and/or an opportunity to meet your legislators
Hearings and Office Visits:

Go to council hearings, or Olympia during session, or even DC! It’s great to see democracy in action – and to show lawmakers that you want to be part of that action.

Don’t just go when you have something you want – show up for your partners’ issues, too. Lawmakers will notice you’re engaged in your community.
Be strategic and choose carefully, but if something new, important, or interesting is happening with your market, publicize it – then make sure you let your electeds know about it personally.

Forward an article or newsletter with a personal note that explains the connection to your market and why you think they might want to know about it.
Letters, Email, Action Alerts, etc.

A handwritten letter is more effective than an email (exception: federal officials)

If you are writing an email, the subject line is critical: make your issue clear right off

If you are signing a form email or petition, BEGIN with a personal message
Phone Calls:

Prepare your message before you dial

Keep it brief but personal

Nervous? Call after hours!

WA Legislative Hotline: (800) 562-6000
Find Your Legislator

You may use the information below to find your legislative district and congressional district (Note about district boundaries).

Address: [ ]
City: [ ]
State: [ ]
Zip: [ ]

District Type: [Legislative] [Congressional]

Find My District
Local advocacy resources for you:

WA STATE FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION!

Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition

Advocacy Tools:

http://www.wsalehc.org/tools-for-advocates/#.UQcI5-__kJ0Q
Thank you for speaking up!

Claire Lane  
Director, Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition  
Claire.Lane2@gmail.com  
(206) 446-0966

Brian Estes  
WSFMA Board - Advocacy Committee chair  
brian@wafarmersmarkets.com