



ADVOCACY MINI-TOOLKIT
(HOW TO TALK TO LEGISLATORS AND TELL OUR STORY)

If you've had a great challenge or success as a woman business owner, it's important to share your story with community members, legislators, and other decision makers!

Here's a quick outline that can help you tell your story in a clear and concise way. But don't read from a script. Use this as a guide to prepare. When you tell your story, speak from your heart!

Introduce your story (2-3 sentences)

1. Set the stage for your story by providing:
 - a. Your full name (even if you've been introduced)
 - b. City or town of residence; and
 - c. Name and ages of those people in your story
2. Start by stating your main message. This tells them *why* you are about to tell them this story!

Make an appeal: CHALLENGE, ACTION, RESULT (4-8 sentences)

3. Explain a CHALLENGE that you faced
4. Explain the ACTION that was taken or can be taken to help you address that challenge
5. Tell what kind of RESULT was achieved or could be achieved due to the action

Wrap it up! (3-5 sentences)

6. Tell how the result would benefit other women business owners, the community, the state
7. State your main message again & tell them what you want them to do about it
8. Say thank you!

Your final story should deliver a clear message in 3 minutes or less!



LEGISLATIVE OFFICE VISIT PREPARATION

Your name: _____
Company Name: _____
NAWBO® Chapter: _____
Name of Legislator or Member of Congress: _____
Time/Date of scheduled meeting: _____
Issue to be discussed: _____

1. Find out more about the legislator or congressperson:
 - a. What committees does this legislator or congressperson sit on?
 - b. What are his/her areas of interest?
 - c. Has he/she taken a position on your issue?
 - d. How have they voted on your issue, or similar issues, in the past?
 - e. Who is the legislative or congressional staff person that handles your issue?
2. Define your *goal* or *intended outcome* for the meeting.
3. Write your 2-3 sentence “clear, concise & convincing” message that you will deliver regarding your issue.
4. What are the arguments against your case? How will you address them?
5. List the representatives from the legislative or congressional office that you will be meeting (name & title):
6. List the name and title of all NAWBO® chapter representatives that will be attending the meeting (try to keep the number of people attending small):
7. List the facts sheets, written statements, or other materials that you will use for the visit, and the purpose of each item (remember to keep written materials brief, to-the-point, and easy to ready)



LEGISLATIVE OFFICE VISIT FOLLOW-UP

Your name: _____ Date: _____

Company Name: _____

NAWBO® Chapter: _____

Name of State Legislator or Member of Congress: _____

Name(s) and title(s) of the person(s) you met with (if other than the legislator): _____

Purpose of the meeting: _____

Issue discussed: _____

1. Was the legislator/staff aware of NAWBO®? If yes, what was their response/feedback regarding NAWBO® programs?

2. What is the position of the member related to the issue you discussed?

- a. Supports
- b. Leaning toward support
- c. Unknown/undecided
- d. Leaning against support
- e. Will not support

3. What are the legislator's primary concerns or comments regarding the issue?

4. What has your legislator heard from constituents on the issue?

5. What kind of follow-up needs to occur?

- a. Additional materials (please specify)
- b. Calls/letters from constituents
- c. Calls/letters from _____
- d. Another meeting to address (please specify)
- e. Other (please specify)

6. Was this a positive experience for you? Why or why not, and how could it have been improved?

7. Other comments:



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
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SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Your Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code
[insert date]

The Honorable [insert full name]
Address, City, State, Zip Code

Dear Representative [or Senator] [insert last name]:

Dear Senator _____/Representative _____

I am writing to encourage you to support reappropriation for the Small Business Administration (SBA) and/or take other measures to re-start the 7(a) business loan program. As you know, the SBA is operating under a Continuing Resolution this fiscal year, which limited loans to \$3.3B by January 31; however, with \$3.2B used already, SBA suspended the 7(a) program on January 6.

The SBA's 7(a) program guarantees loans for general business operations, equipment and expenses – backing 40% of all long-term lending to the country's small businesses. In the past three years, it has provided financing to more than 40,000 start-up small businesses and to more than 99,000 existing small businesses. SBA 7(a) loans were a source of more than 347,000 jobs created last year.

- 99% of all American businesses are classified as small businesses and 50% of the American workforce is employed by small businesses.
- 75% of new jobs come from small businesses.

President Bush repeatedly has said that the nation's small businesses would help lead the nation's recovery from the economic downturn. This loan disruption is crippling small business while we're all trying to come out of a recession. With the economy accelerating, many small-business owners are finally ready to expand their businesses and add jobs. But they need funds to execute their plans, and the lack of quick access to this popular financing tool will put many of those plans on hold. Entrepreneurs, especially women, are left without funding. <<Include personal story about how your business was started or expanded with an SBA loan.>>

The disruption in lending comes at a most difficult time. Not only will small business feel the negative impact of this decision – so will the U.S. economy.

Therefore, I strongly encourage you to take action for the SBA 7(a) loan program in these three ways:

1. Request that SBA continue processing the loan applications submitted to date and not return applications as told to local SBA offices in their January 6 memo stopping the program.
2. You and your colleagues must pass SBA appropriation legislation as quickly as possible upon return from recess January 20.
3. In FY2005, increase 7(a) loan budget to at least \$12B, a level-in-line with the small business demand.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Name/Address (either home or office, depending on which is in their district)

Source: Lifted from an actual NAWBO® Dallas Legislative Letter



MEDIA OUTREACH AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL

The media are an integral part of creating visibility for women business owners and NAWBO®. But with so many global, national and statewide issues clamoring for coverage, it's easy to be overlooked.

We will need your help with media outreach to demonstrate the power of women business owners and NAWBO® chapters.

The best advice we can give you is this: develop good relationships with the media contacts in your community. Know your local media: which reporters cover what topics, what special programming they air, and their audience demographics. Become their "friend," the reputable and reliable resource they go to when they need information and resources...even if it's not a story about your organization. Be totally honest and ethical with them; never ever lie or hide facts!

Reporters will remember you when you do have something to say and your efforts will pay off.

On the other hand, remember that no matter how friendly, your relationship with the media is a professional one. Nothing is ever off the record. Your statements will be cut and edited into sound-bites or pull-quotes that may not even resemble the interview you remember. This is why carefully crafted message points are so important!

Preparing for a Media Call

Being prepared for and responding quickly to a media call/interview is essential. The following tips will help you prepare.

- You should be prepared so that you are comfortable with any media calls. As your institution's local point person you should:
 - Be articulate
 - Feel comfortable speaking/interacting with the media
- You should review all "NAWBO®" key messages.
- If you receive a message that a reporter called, review all the key messages and call them back within an hour.
- Practice and remember the two to three concise messages that you want to read in print, see on television, or hear on radio.
- Remember, you can write down your key messages and use these "cheat sheets" during your conversation -- especially during a phone interview.
- Stand up when talking to the media. This allows you to speak clearer and breath deeper and it will positively affect your speech.
- It is important that all media calls are handled in a consistent manner. Make sure anyone answering the telephone knows who the designated Media Relations contact is and how to reach them at all times.
- Keep in mind that when you call a reporter, they may be abrupt. They are often working on deadline, so don't take it personally and don't get discouraged.
- Ask the reporter "Is this a good time to talk?"
 - If YES, be brief. Present the reason for your call in a few sentences, letting the reporter know you have information that you think will be of interest to his/her readers/viewers/listeners. Ask if you can fax or email the information and then follow-up later that day to discuss it. Request a specific time that is good for the reporter, and also let him or her know that you would be happy to make other local women business owners available for an interview.
 - If NO, ask if you can email or fax them background on a timely study and request a better to call back to follow-up. The reporter will appreciate your courtesy.
- If a reporter is not at his or her desk:
 - Leave a brief phone message (see previous page for what you should say)
 - Keep it to 30 seconds
 - Give your name and phone number at the end of message



- If you don't hear back, try again or ask to be directed to someone else who might cover the story
- Be persistent but polite!
- Don't give up if you don't have success with the first couple of reporters you contact
- Remember, when talking to the media there is no such thing as "off the record"

Following is a "cheat sheet" to review prior to working with media:

DO	DON'T
<p>Review key messages before calling media.</p> <p>When interviewed, recite 2-3 messages about NAWBO® and local women business owners that you would like to get across to media.</p>	<p><i>Don't</i> contact media without being prepared to speak about NAWBO® and local women business owners.</p> <p><i>Don't</i> be verbose in your answers or speak in jargon.</p>
<p>Respond to media calls in timely, consistent manner. If you receive a message from a reporter, review key messages and call them back <u>within an hour</u>.</p> <p>Make sure anyone answering the telephone knows who is handling media calls and how to reach them at all times.</p>	<p><i>Don't</i> delay returning a journalist's phone call, they may be working on deadline.</p> <p><i>Don't</i> allow just anyone to contact media. Messages need to be concise and consistent.</p>
<p>Keep your answers informative and educational, yet light.</p>	<p><i>Don't</i> speculate. If you don't know the answer, say so.</p> <p><i>Don't</i> make claims about NAWBO®, local business owners, or your business that cannot be supported.</p>
<p>Have a fact sheet at hand when speaking with media to include all pertinent information about NAWBO®, local business owners, and your business.</p> <p>Anticipate likely questions and have answers ready.</p>	<p><i>Don't</i> be unprepared for unexpected questions.</p> <p><i>Don't</i> go "off the record".</p>
<p>Keep in mind that when you call a reporter, they may be abrupt. They are often working on deadline.</p>	<p><i>Don't</i> be discouraged. Be persistent!</p>

Media Tool #1: Press Releases

Press releases are the basis for much of the information in a typical newspaper, radio or television newscast. In a large market, editors and reporters can receive more than 100 press releases in a single day! Most are disregarded because they do not contain any news or contact information.

STEP 1

PLANNING THE RELEASE

- What is it about your news that makes it newsworthy?
- Is the information of general interest (not just self-promotion)?
- Can you provide a new perspective?
- Is it about something that affects the lives of the public in some way?
- Is it unusual or out of the ordinary?

STEP 2

FORMATING A PRESS RELEASE



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- For immediate release (meaning the information can be used as soon as it is received) or Embargoed until [date/time] (meaning the information cannot be used until the date/time specified)
- Date the release is distributed
- Contact information (name, phone, email)
- Organization's logo
- Headline (set in all capital letters, boldface or underlined, up to four lines long and centered on the page)
- Dateline (city/state and date)
- Lead (first paragraph, summary of most important message; anticipate the reporter's story and try to provide his opening paragraph for him)
- Supporting paragraphs with quote(s)
- Boilerplate (canned information about your organization)
- "More" if release is more than one page; ### on last page of release (centered on bottom of page)
- Note: press releases should always be double spaced!

STEP 3

WRITING THE RELEASE

- Write in inverted pyramid style: put the most important information first, the least important at the bottom. Clearly convey the who, what, where, when, why and how as you write.
 - WHO is making the announcement (usually your organization) — but remember, YOU are not the news; the news is what is being announced.
 - WHAT is being announced
 - WHERE the event will take place
 - WHEN it will happen (date and time)
 - WHY it is important
 - HOW it will be done
- Double space but try to keep your release to one page.
- Include one or two substantive quotes, identifying the spokesperson by name and title.
- End the release by centering ### at the bottom. If your release runs more than one page, center the word "more" at the bottom of the first page and write "Page 2 – [subject reference]" at the top of the second.

Media Tool #2: Media Alerts

A media alert or media advisory is often used to draw media to an event such as a press conference. It is a summarized press release that provides details in an easy-to-read bulleted format and should never be more than one page. Be sure to highlight photo opportunities for television cameras. Fax or email the media alert to:

- NEWSPAPERS
one to two weeks prior to your event for dailies, up to three weeks prior to your event for weeklies
- TELEVISION
two to three days prior to your event for local TV news, two to three weeks prior to your event for talk shows
- RADIO
two to three days prior to your event

Media Tool #3: Backgrounders

Sometimes you just can't include everything in a one-page press release. In these cases, you may also want to develop a backgrounder. Backgrounders are "stories" with a beginning, middle and end and are not as constrained as other publicity materials.

Media Tool #4: Fact Sheets

A fact sheet is a good way to provide complicated information to the press in an easy-to-grasp manner. It is formatted so that reporters can easily find specific information.

Media Tool #5: Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor



Newspaper opinion editorials (op-eds) and letters to the editor are excellent ways to get a message out to a broad audience. This is especially true if you want to reach elected officials. They often track their local newspapers to “take the temperature” of the public opinion. An op-ed is an article that is written in essay form and submitted by someone outside the newspaper. It is different from an editorial, which is the newspaper’s position on a particular issue. Here are a few tips on writing and submitting an op-ed:

- Be timely. Write about an issue that is currently “hot” in the news.
- Use a local angle or make a unique point. You want your opinion to be new and interesting, not the same thing that has been said before. For example, link state tax or healthcare changes to how they would affect local women business owners.
- Determine who the best person is to author the piece (e.g., program director, supportive elected official, community leader, school leader, college professor)
- Be concise. Newspapers will have restrictions on the length of op-eds. Contact your local newspaper to find out the guidelines. They usually want between 500 and 800 words.
- Write a compelling introductory paragraph that captures the audience. Deliver your message early in the article and repeat it again at the end.
- Pitch your op-ed to the newspaper. Call and test their interest in your piece. If they are interested, fax it to them with a cover letter. Be sure to include your contact information and one sentence about the author.
- Do not submit an op-ed to two newspapers in the same market. Try your first choice; if they don’t pick it up, try another media outlet.

Letters to the editor are also a great advocacy tool. They are more reactive than proactive because in most cases the letters are in response to a recently published article. But letters are an excellent way to express support for a particular news item, or share information or an opposing view that was not addressed. To write an effective letter, be sure to:

- Be brief. Three paragraphs of one to three sentences each should be plenty. Long letters will be edited to meet space constraints.
- Do not appear to be over-emotional in your letter. It could cause the paper to decline to print your letter. Take the high road. Avoid sarcasm as well as negative comments.
- Be sure to include your contact information because many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address.
- Keep your letter to one topic.
- Timing is important. You have a better chance of getting your letter printed if it is related to a topic or article that was recently in the news.
- Encourage other women business owners in your community to write. Remember that there is limited space, so only a few letters are printed. Keep the letters coming and eventually you’ll get printed.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

You may use the following sample Letter to the Editor as a starting point.

Dear Editor,

Last week, members of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) from Chicago, Peoria and Springfield came together in the state capital to legislatively advocate on behalf of the 385,000 privately-held, women-owned firms in Illinois.

Illinois women-owned businesses account for \$195 million in annual sales and employ a workforce of 1.4 million.

Illinois ranks fifth, among all states, in the number of women-owned firms. Together we are a powerful advocacy and voting force.

Highlights of the message we took to our legislators in Springfield include our unwavering support of an equitable tax policy that fosters economic growth; support of legislation for affordable health care; and support of a Federal five-percent procurement set-aside program for women-owned small businesses.

We ask that our legislators recognize our concerns as women business owners and take active steps towards enacting legislation that can positively impact our businesses. We will support those legislators who support us.

Sincerely,

<INSERT NAME, NAME OF BUSINESS, NAWBO CHAPTER>