

Gaining Support for Your Science Center: A Planning Guide

By Colin Johnson

Your objective	Your target audience—decision makers	Motivation of target audience	Evidence appropriate to this audience	Appropriate communication mechanisms for this audience	Fellow advocates in approaching this audience
<i>What must you achieve?</i>	<i>Whom do you need to call?</i>	<i>Why should they take any notice?</i>	<i>What will make them sit up?</i>	<i>How do you reach them?</i>	<i>Who else can help?</i>
1. To secure political support from communities and government and access to relevant educational budgets	Politicians: local, regional, and national and those involved in transnational parliaments or relevant international organizations	Meeting published government goals for science, education, culture Having a platform for their own personal/party political ambitions	Matching between center's own programs and government objectives International comparators Feedback from students, teachers, adult learners	Written and personal briefings to politicians and officials One-on-one communication—face to face, by mail and/or email Center's web site	Other local/regional educational/cultural visitor attractions Endorsement by prominent figures in science, government, or politics
2. To attract group educational visits in order to generate both credibility and income	School teachers and others associated with school governance, management, and financing	Support for curriculum Stimulus for learning Enrichment of teaching/learning opportunities	Center's own case studies Research references Feedback from students and teachers	One-on-one communication—by mail and/or email Professional development meetings for teachers Center's web site	Other teachers Students Parents
3. To secure the center's reputation as part of the educational landscape and to establish credible partnerships in pursuit of shared goals and funding opportunities	Scientists (broadly defined) and their research communities – to include those in the social sciences whose work relates to the informal learning sector	Reaching a lay audience for their work Access to new funding streams through partnership PR for own institution	Rigor in design of exhibits and programs Science "well drawn out" in exhibits and programs Endorsement by establishment figures	Personal approaches Invitation for 'behind the scenes' visit to center Willingness to visit the scientists' workplace Publications, web site and conferences	Other scientists Endorsement by people in the public eye Professional associations with museum and science center members

Your objective <i>What must you achieve?</i>	Your target audience – the decision maker(s) <i>Who do you need to call?</i>	Motivation of target audience <i>Why should they take any notice?</i>	Evidence appropriate to this audience <i>What will make them sit up?</i>	Appropriate communication mechanisms for this audience <i>How do you reach them?</i>	Fellow advocates in approaching this audience <i>Who else can help?</i>
4. To secure support for family visits, building advocates and generating revenue	Parents and other adults with charge of children in family groups	Finding purposeful leisure opportunities for own and others' children Routes to more formal learning opportunities (especially home-schoolers)	First-hand experience Reports of other parents	Print and broadcast media Affiliation/ membership schemes Center's web site	Other parents Children themselves Celebrity endorsement
5. To establish funding partnerships with charitable and commercial organisations	Trustees and senior managers of charitable and commercial funding partners Persons with a professional or social contact with key individuals from the above	Triple bottom line business considerations: economic, social, environmental Brand value and reputation Licence to operate Philanthropy	Intrinsic value of programme or other funding opportunity Strict relevance to goals of prospective funder Reputation in regard to public good and financial probity	Key individual(s) and/or those who have influence with them) to visit the center, experience it with your visitors, and meet relevant staff	Board members Center's own project champions Representatives of similar organizations to the prospective funder
6. To develop an awareness and understanding of the center , and its educational activities and initiatives, through planned and sustained media relations	News editors/ reporters of: special interest/ trade press local, regional and national press broadcast media (radio and TV) electronic media freelance journalists	Newsworthy stories that will appeal to the readers, listeners, viewers Human-interest stories featuring real people and real situations	Interviews with spokesperson Case studies Statistics Eye-catching/ quirky photographs or filming opportunities	News releases Case studies Invitations to photo calls, press conferences, launches Press packs	Celebrity/VIP endorsement Quotes/comments from impartial spokespeople and opinion leaders in the field