



Tip Sheet for Working with Grasstops

Who are Grasstops?

Grasstops are activists or members of an organization or geographic area that have a high professional and/or public profile, may be part of the “political family” for a decision maker, and can raise public attention or influence decision makers through established connections. For example, an organization’s board members and founders, community leaders, and nationally recognized individuals (including experts, professionals, etc.) constitute potential grasstops advocates. Grasstops advocates can reinforce grassroots action, move an issue into the spotlight, and carry a message between the general public and more powerful targets.

Tips for Working with Grasstops

- Identify influential community spokespeople. Brainstorm possible grasstops, looking for those that appeal to the community, media and decision makers. Ask yourself if these people influence your target—either elected officials via meetings, the public via media spokesperson work, or both.
- Identify individual grasstops:
 - with a connection to the issue;
 - with a personal/professional connection; or
 - that are unlikely allies and voices.
- Set up a contact list.
- Begin with easy steps; and move them up the ladder of involvement.
- Set goals and discuss them with your group.
- Be strategic.
- Ways to engage your grasstops:
 - Sign-on letters
 - Briefings from partners on the issue
 - Meetings with decision makers
 - Visits to the grasstops work site, such as a clinic; set up a seminar
 - Calls to decision makers
 - News conference participation
 - Individual actions that the grasstops person wants to do on their own, like letters to the editor, guest opinion, or organizing other grasstops