Selling the CRS to Local Officials

CRS for Community Resilience
Why engage local officials?

Two factors virtually guarantee an issue on the place of the national agenda

Mention by President

Coverage in New York Times

Coverage in Media

Mention by Official

What that means for local agendas...

Agenda-Setting (1996) by Rogers and Dearing

Source: Agenda Setting (1996) by Rogers and Dearing.
The Earlier, The Better

- Give them more opportunities to be involved
- More time to feel personally-invested
- It’s never too late!

Image Credit: FEMA Photo Library via Wikimedia Commons
Step 1: Identify interests and priorities

• What are key issues to the official you’re trying to sell CRS or a specific action to?
  • Check websites that list how they have voted about certain issues
• Why are those issues important?

www.countable.us  www.opensecrets.org  www.votesmart.org
Step 2: Frame the Issue

- Frame the activity/element so that it addresses that official’s unique concerns
- Emphasize common ground or near-universal values
  - Public health and safety: “Our residents deserve response services during times of flooding, and we need to minimize risks to first responders.”
- Consensus building
- Protect and realize interests of all stakeholders
  - “We can provide recreational opportunities and space for events, while increasing flood storage capacity and removing residents from harm.”
- Maximize mutual benefits, transparency, trust
Step 3: Have a “Sales Pitch”

- Lead with main points
- Clearly outline what support you need
- When it comes to messaging: less is more.
- Educate them about the issue
- Establish yourself as an expert
  - Reduce policy rates for NFIP holders
  - Enhance public safety
  - Reduce damages
  - Avoid economic disruption/losses
  - Reduce human suffering
  - Protect the environment
- Say thank you.
Step 4: Get on the Local Agenda

• When important issues surface or when an already-troublesome issue reaches critical proportions
• When an external source calls attention to your issue
• When new information reveals or underlines a serious issue
• When political conditions make it easy or appropriate

Source: University of Kansas Community Toolbox: http://ctb.ku.edu/en
Constituents Matter Too

• Do people know about the issue?
• Community can take ownership
• Constituents can contact local officials
• Highlight benefits to constituents above and beyond reduced insurance premiums
Methods to Help Make Your Case

- Connect your issue to their legacy
- Propose “pilot programs”
- Tie proposal to a larger agenda or plan
- Conduct a public risk assessment
- Collaborate with a non-governmental group to make the pitch.

Source: University of Kansas Community Toolbox: http://ctb.ku.edu/en

Image Credit: Dudley Town Hall Meeting via Wikimedia Commons
Engage Other Influential People

• Every community has influential people.
• Brainstorm how you can partner with other agencies, groups, and non-profits.
• Influential people:
  • Legislative aides
  • Grassroots activists
  • Religious leaders
  • Business leaders
  • Service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, etc.)
Questions?