

Why? What? Who? When? Where? How?

Well-researched facts, which can be developed into potential arguments and talking points, are the first step. Why are you interested? Which level of government is involved, if any; who is making the decisions; who else is involved currently; who else could be involved; who can you partner with; when are decisions being made?

The basic questions of **why? what? who? when? where? how?** need to be answered. Check your sources and your facts.

- **What** are the facts? Know where to find reliable, up-to-date information; is there data and research available?
- **What** is the history of the issue and the context it is situated in?
- **What** has been done on the issue already?
- **What** is the current legislation/bylaw? Is it being changed, amended, repealed?
- **Who** is involved, or who could be involved? Can you join a coalition of groups already working on this issue, or support the work of another group?
- **Who** else sees this as a problem? What do they feel are the solutions? Ask their opinions.
- **Who** can be a champion?
- **Which** level of government is involved, if any?
- **Who** is making decisions related to your issue? Know the decision makers and their interests; don't forget their staff.
- **How** are the decisions being made?
- **What** is the policy process?
- **When** will decisions be made? **What** other pressures are on the government or Council?
- **Where** is your issue in their agenda?
- If relevant, know of **international studies and comparisons**, even for some municipal projects.
- Do you have **credible information from reliable sources**?

Your goal should be to gather as much background information as possible about the issue, who you want to influence, and how you might want to frame your “ask” to decision makers.

For sources of information, nowadays people generally start with web-based research (do check the validity of resource), but don't forget the others - local newspapers, local library (they can also give you guidance on what and how to research), the legislative libraries such as the Library of Parliament, also talk to those involved including local elected officials (do this with the knowledge of your President).

Get local stories and local examples to bolster your argument.

Research as advocacy: questions can always be asked both verbally and in writing in order to develop policy.