CCLA's Grasstops Lobbying Playbook

How to lobby Grasstops Influencers the CCL way with how-to guides, stories and examples.

What is Grasstops Lobbying? 2

What is the Impact of Grasstops Lobbying? 2

How do we go about Grasstops Lobbying? 3

Step 1: Team Up 3

- Recruit 3
- Train 4
- Retain 4
- Team Roles 4
- 5
- Team Management 5

Step 2: Research 5

- 1. Legislative Profile 5
- 2. Professional Profile 6
- 3. Personal Profile 6
- Research Your Local Area 6
- Research Your Local Impacts 6

Step 3: Identify 7

- List 7
- Conduct a Relationship Inventory in your Team 7
- Brainstorming in the Wider CCL Community 8
- Prioritise 8

Step 4: Contact 11

- Preparing the Meeting Request 11
- Making the Meeting Request 13

Step 5: Engage 13

- Before the Meeting 13
- At the Meeting 14
- After the Meeting 15

Grow the Relationship 15

Staying in touch 15
Leveraging Support 15
Measuring Success of Grasstops Lobbying 16

What is Grasstops Lobbying?

Grasstops Lobbying is asking prominent community leaders, businesses, local governments, and non-governmental organisations to support our climate solutions.

A prominent community leader, or 'influencer', is an individual who represents a collection of other people or has a large following. For example, a doctor who is a sole proprietor is not prominent, but a doctor who is the head of a medical association, a hospital department, or a patient advocacy organisation would be considered prominent. They typically

- Belong to organisations, are community leaders or prominent individuals
- Are a major employer, large association leader, faith, business, or city leader, etc.
- Have many possible connections
- Have a larger footprint in the community

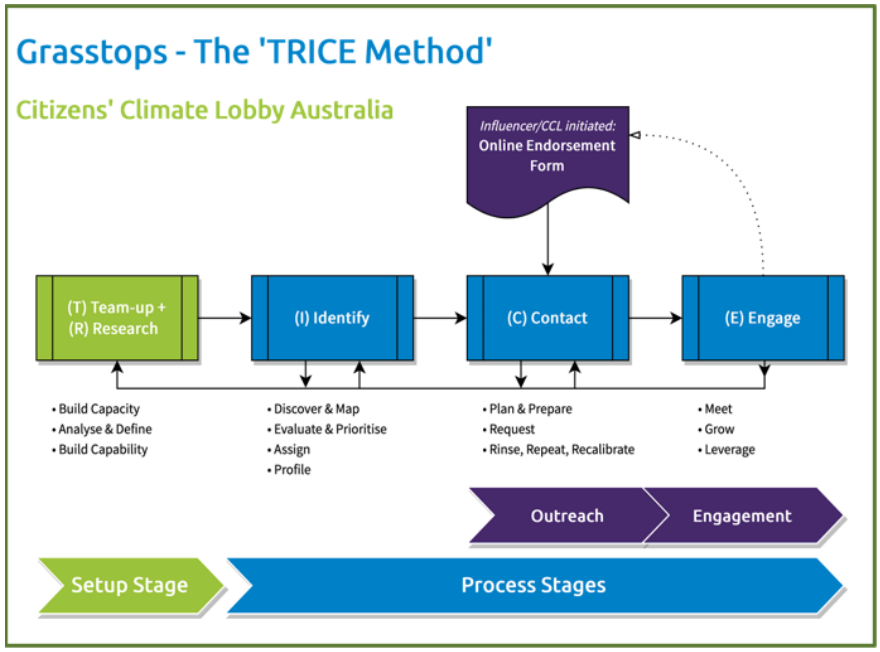
What is the Impact of Grasstops Lobbying?

The primary objective of Grasstops Lobbying is to create political will by leveraging support from the Grasstops for your keystone solution. The greater the perception of support, the stronger your proposed solution.

Grasstops lobbying intersects and integrates with your other lobbying efforts. CCL uses the support from the Grasstops to bolster our Federal and State lobbying efforts and to keep CCL's proposed solution front of mind. Grasstops support helps CCL build awareness in the public eye and across the political spectrum.

How do we go about Grasstops Lobbying?

CCL Australia endorses the 'T.R.I.C.E. Method': Team-up and Research to Identify, Contact, and Engage for Grasstops Lobbying.



The word 'trice' is a noun that is aptly defined as: in a very short time. By applying the TRICE Method, your Grasstops Lobbying efforts can produce a greater impact, sooner.

Step 1: Team Up

Why team-up with others? Teams allow specialisation; different roles for people with different skills, preferences, and availability.

You may be one of those superstars who can go it alone. If so, great! Go get 'em! However, most people benefit from working with others. In any case, if you are a superstar, others will welcome your experience and guidance.

Team members can motivate, support, and learn from each other. More efficient → more effective → more rewarding and more fun! A team can be as little as two people. Grow as you go.

Recruit

Recruit volunteers to join your team. Leverage your network, friends, family and community connections where possible.

Here are some recruitment strategies to consider:

Hold an introductory meeting where people can connect and get to know one another better, preferably face-to-face and over food and drink.

Create a ‘Help Wanted Ad’ for your social media, or email potential team members inviting them to meetings.

Train

A business background is not required; being "business-like" is. These things work for grasstops lobbying, not just business:

- Being organised and methodical: work in teams and follow simple, repeatable processes.
- Being accountable and consistent: make, track and meet appropriate commitments, at a steady pace.
- Professional, Polite and Patient Persistence (the 4 Ps).

Retain

Support each other, reward each other and grow together.

Team Roles

Here is a list of team roles the CCL recommends considering for effective Grasstops lobbying groups.

Coordinators:

Get things going, keeps things moving. This is most important! Without a steady cadence of brief, crisp meetings, and reminder emails and calls, volunteer efforts can tend to stall. Lead in recruiting, along with your Group Leaders. Get people organised: schedule and lead team meetings. Take the lead in motivating team members.

Delegates:

Can represent your organisation in 1-on-1 or team conversation. Have some business experience, good with email and in-person communications. Have some community connections. The role is similar to the ‘liaison’ with a Member of Parliament but instead with Community Leaders.

Researchers:

Have research skills (online: LinkedIn, Twitter, websites, Google). May or may not participate in lobby meetings. Coordinate with your Group Liaison to understand the relationship with your Members of Parliament, research for Influencer Bios.

Trackers:

Track progress, connections, minutes and milestones.

Connectors:

Have very little time but have community connections and/or high name recognitions. Are willing to introduce the delegates to community leaders (e.g., email intro, join them for coffee, etc.).

Team Management

As a team, you will want to meet regularly, as without a steady cadence of brief, crisp meetings, and reminder emails and calls, volunteer efforts can tend to stall. Meet regularly and efficiently - like the perfect apple: crisp, sweet, and juicy! Follow a very simple, standard meeting process:

- Record attendance
- Review the previous minutes
- What's on for the next 2 weeks?
- Confirm next actions and next meeting
- Minutes

Step 2: Research

Before you start researching your Member(s) of Parliament, consult your Group Leader and/or Group's Liaison to understand what information may already exist. Work with them to document and update an MP Bio for your Federal and State MPs, based on research in three key areas.

1. Legislative Profile

Find out about your Member's stance on party issues, what leadership they have in the party, what committees they serve on, what causes or policies they champion, etc. Use a search engine to check their campaign website, social media accounts, and any other relevant sources of information.

Helpful resources:

- Open Politics Australia - specifically under the 'Memberships/Office holder or donor' section of your MP's profile page
- APH: Search for Members
- APH: Parliamentary Friendship Groups
- They Vote for You

2. Professional Profile

Find out about your Member's background, what their religious beliefs are, what schools/universities they attended, what their profession was ahead of Parliament, what clubs and interests they still participate in, etc.

- For your Member's previous positions held, who did they work with?
- What Boards do they sit on? Can you influence other members of that board to help move them?
- Do you or your Group have connections to family or friends that also attended that school/university, alumni, or organisations?
- What connections does your Group have to the civic or religious organisations your Member belongs to?

3. Personal Profile

Find out about the background behind your Member's key staff, family/spouse/relatives, donors, peers in Parliament, and community connections back in their home electorate.

Which other elected officials do they look up to or are friendly with in their party and across the aisle?

Who gives them endorsements during the campaign? Those are good groups to approach because the Member will want them to re-endorse next election cycle.

Research Your Local Area

Local Governments (Councils) will often have reports on their website. For example: City of Ryde's Social Plan 2019-24.

Research Your Local Impacts

Who are the biggest employers in your electorate? How will they be impacted by climate change? Set meetings and see if you can work together about how they are planning for climate change or dealing with it already.

What are the unique impacts in your electorate/state? Who are some unusual voices that may be impacted who could speak? (First Nations organisations, skiing examples, fishing, farming, etc.)

What industries are most likely to be impacted down the line? Begin reaching out to connect, learn from them, and highlight the impacts your community faces.

How do your findings from your research about your local area relate to the local impacts and solutions? For example, if population growth in your local area is forecasted to place greater strain on available and affordable health services, in which ways will the health impacts caused by climate change further exacerbate this issue?

Further reading: Local Impacts Resource

Step 3: Identify

The Identify step involves:

- creating an extensive list of prospective influencers in your area
- prioritising them based on their Impact on your goals, the Likelihood of their taking action, and their Accessibility
- assigning a team delegate to high priority influencers to "own" the relationship and profile them

List

Understanding your prospective influencers is the foundation of effective relationships. Time spent here will pay off later, so take time to do it well. The more potential impact an influencer has on your MP, the more you will need to do at this stage.

Make a single, extensive list of qualified prospects by brainstorming with your team. For now, do not worry about 'how', simply identify the names and don't evaluate them yet. Keep all your team members "on the same page" by maintaining only one list. When you add names to the list, take care to avoid duplicates.

Conduct a Relationship Inventory in your Team

Who do members in your Group know and possibly have connections to in Parliament, with local organisations, and community leaders?

Develop a quick survey for volunteers in your Group. Ask questions like:

- Have you ever met our Member of Parliament (or met other Members?)
- Do they have connections in the second, third or fourth degree? (i.e. do their daughters go to the same school, do they know someone else that attends their local church, does an old colleague of theirs share the same work background?)

Use a system for organising what you collect. Take notes on the quality of your volunteers' relationships, how trusted they might be by the MP, what kinds of skills they have, what other connections they have, and how much these connections might be willing to do.

Brainstorming in the Wider CCL Community

At your meetings you could do a 'Who Do You Know' exercise. Adapt your techniques if you are meeting on Zoom as opposed to in person.

3 x 5 Cards: if you have larger turnouts (10 or more), schedule 5 minutes near the beginning of your next meeting or conference. Explain the importance of Grasstops and the role of a Connector. Pass around a big stack of 3x5 cards to everyone at the beginning and ask them all to write the names of organisations, businesses, or other community leaders they want to connect us with.

Call-outs: for a smaller group, have people call out names, and one person writes them down on a whiteboard or flipchart, or on a single list.

Post-its: for a smaller group, give everyone a stack of Post-its, and spend 5 minutes writing down names, placing them on the wall and group together.

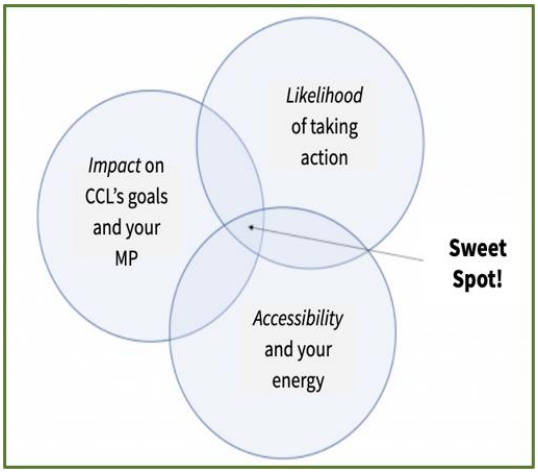
Some good prospects include large local employers, local elected officials, faith leaders, community groups.

Prioritise

To narrow the focus of your team's extended list of identified influencers to a more manageable size, the next step is to prioritise. There are two steps to prioritising: assess an influencer against the A.L.I. criteria and then allocate a priority rating based on your current focus.

Step1: A.L.I. Assessment

Aim for the 'sweet spot' where the three criteria of Accessibility to the influencer and energy to pursue them, the Likelihood of the influencer acting and their Impact on your goals overlap.



Step 2: Evaluate each influencer on your list based on their proximity to the 'sweet spot':

	Access	Likelihood	Impact
High	Insider relationship with decision makers	On record as climate champion	Major employer / donor
Medium	Warm introduction to a decision maker	No reason not to	Minor employer, known in community
Low	Cold call	Would take courage from them to act	Every vote counts

Step 3: Priority Rating

After conducting an assessment using the A.L.I. criteria, rate each influencer with a current overall priority rating of either 'P1', 'P2', or 'P3'. This priority rating should be based upon the A.L.I. assessment and your current focus.

Priority 1: high ALI assessment, and actively working on them now, or ready to start with them now.

Priority 2: medium ALI assessment, and ready to start working with them when time permits (when you or your team has more "bandwidth" (time, attention, and energy).

Priority 3: low ALI assessment, maybe someday (review quarterly). These influencers are still worth keeping on the list for when circumstances change. For example, it may be the local farming association, which has been very sceptical about climate impacts, but you keep them there because agriculture is important to your electorate.

If you think you will never want to work with an Influencer, simply do not put them on the list.

Priority ratings also help with your strategy. For example, you may want to try mass mailing your Priority 2s while you focus on individual email and phone follow-ups to get meetings with your Priority 1s.

Assign

Next, assign a team delegate to high priority influencers to "own" the relationship. Delegates are like your Liaisons to MPs. They are the main link between the influencer and your organisation. Ideally, they have either a personal connection with the community leader or with someone in the organisation and/or experience/understanding of the organisation's work. They typically act as a delegate and initiate the contact (make the phone call, send the email). They also keep track of their contact and engagement efforts and record these details in the system.

Assign a primary delegate to each of the highest priority influencers on your list.

Each active team member should aim to be the primary delegate for roughly 3-5 active P1 prospects at any one time. Having too many makes it hard to focus; having too few reduces efficiency (e.g. if you secured a distant meeting date for a P1 prospect, you want to have other P1s you can work on while you are waiting).

Profile

Just like working with an MP, when meeting with a community leader, you really need to do your homework to understand what their priorities are.

Where have they already been successful? Have they done any advocacy for your cause or endorsed a similar initiative? Make sure to acknowledge that through appreciation and respect.

Try to understand their position and make your 'asks' consistent with what they're willing to do.

Research the community leader or the organisation and its leaders to learn how to best 'reach' and 'connect' with them. Some questions to get you started are:

- Who are their leaders, what have they done?
- What is the organisation's history and accomplishments?
- Who and what have they contributed to?
- How might they be affected by climate change?
- What have they done, ideally in terms of climate action, environmental sustainability, or social responsibility, which you can show appreciation for?
- What values can you connect over?

Sources of Information

Social media, websites and search engines, your team's relationship inventory, your community, for example through business organisations like Rotary and Chambers of Commerce.

Find and record email and phone numbers of key contacts

Identify a "Leader" - the highest-level decision maker who is willing to talk with you. For smaller companies, this could be the CEO, owner, manager. For larger companies, it might be a VP of Corporate Responsibility, or a Director of Policy or Environmental Health and Safety. It will be their job to make your case to the decision maker(s) and bring back the answer.

Alternatively, identify an "Intermediary", your initial access point into an organization. This could be someone you know or who has been introduced by a colleague/ "connector". It's often someone whose job makes them a likely supporter or champion; for example, CCL would look for "sustainability" in their title. If they have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) report, see who authored it.

Get their contact information and record it in the system. Consider also:

"Contact Us" forms: does your prospect's website have a "Contact Us" form. Craft a short, appreciative and clear ask, borrowing content from your intro email.

Social Media: Connect with them on LinkedIn, follow them on Twitter, retweet any good content with comments connecting it to your cause. Both platforms have a direct message feature.

Face to face: will they be at any meetings, conferences, parties, or other events where you can approach them? Note: this is not for the faint of heart, but you can get fast results!

Make a careful record of all your findings in your system. Use a template for these records.

Step 4: Contact

Getting the attention of your high priority prospects – and a favourable response that leads to a meeting – can take a long time, especially with bigger organisations and time-poor community leaders. This is where the four Ps (Polite, Professional, Patient, Persistent) really pay off.

Even though community and business leaders can be very powerful voices in engaging with governments and MPs, it can also be intimidating to begin reaching out to them. It is important to remember there are a lot of similarities in engaging with the Grasstops and engaging with your Members of Parliament, and the same approach needs to be taken.

The long-term goal in both areas is developing and maintaining relationships of trust, where you are seen as a 'trusted adviser', working on common goals instead of as an adversarial organisation.

Preparing the Meeting Request

Use the background research on your prospect to prepare an email or Contact Form message or talking points for a phone call.

Email tips: The Cool Call Email

Here is a suggested outline for your first email to a priority prospect. Your goal is to get a reply that leads to a phone call or face meeting.

- Why is it "cool" and not "cold"? You warm it up!
- It's from your mailbox, not from a mass mailing service like Mailchimp or Constant Contact. This is slower for doing large volume mailing, but more likely to get past spam and promotions filters. Use it for companies that you have researched.
- Use a descriptive subject line that makes it clear what this is and conveys that you are not a distant mass mailer (e.g. can we meet for coffee, climate conversation in downtown Petaluma?).
- You identify yourself as a "volunteer" and neighbour (who lives in their community).
- Mention it if you have something you have in common; you are a customer, attended same college, have a mutual friend, attended the same event.

- Express appreciation for something about them/their company that you genuinely appreciate. This would be a sentence or two in the second paragraph. If possible, use this to bridge to the ask.
- Crisply describe the purpose of the email (e.g. I'd like to meet with you here in your office or favourite café to hear your views about….)
- Emphasise listening, not just in the letter, but in the meeting as well.
- Tailor the subject to what you've learned about your prospect (e.g. if they are more conservative, talk about 'local energy development' rather than 'green jobs').
- Close with your contact information and another thanks.
- For a "signature", keep it short and simple. Avoid image files; for many email apps, they show up as empty boxes and require downloading.

A CCL cool call email example:

Subject: Meet at Aqus to talk climate and economic development?

Dear Jim:

I'm a Petaluma volunteer for Citizens Climate Lobby. Barry Vessar introduced us at a Business for Clean Energy Breakfast at Labcon last year.

I hope you and your loved ones and your business have fared well over the past few challenging years of the pandemic. As challenging as this has been, the additional and growing burdens of climate change will be even more difficult. We have seen of late the horrible results when experts' warnings are ignored and remedies delayed. I really appreciate Labcon's progress with sustainability and clean energy. Your leadership is so important to making progress on climate. I'd like to meet with you and discuss how businesses are helping to make national progress on climate. You may have heard about the Inflation Reduction Act passing Congress this summer, specifically that it is estimated to cut emissions by 40% by 2050. You may also know that carbon fee and dividend can help us cut another 10% to meet targets set by the IPCC report. You can help move us forward on effective solutions, like carbon pricing.

Please let me know when and where would be a good time to meet. You can Reply to this, and/or call/text me at 123-456-789.

Thanks for your great work at Labcon!

Bruce Hagen
National Program Manager, Grasstops Outreach Program, Citizens' Climate Lobby

For phone calls, have your talking points, and practice them. Remember, your goal is not to convince them to support your asks, but to get a meeting to talk about climate action.

Use a shorter version of your email message for 'Contact Us' forms (don't exceed the word/character count).

Making the Meeting Request

Consider when might be the best time to call or email. If emailing, when will they be most likely to see it? If ringing, make sure YOU are feeling good and ready. It can be good to send the email then call. Wait 3 to 5 days to give them a chance to read the email. You can refer to it on the call.

Overcoming Obstacles

What if they don't respond to your email? This is normal for larger businesses. Remember the 4Ps: wait a week or two, then resend your original message. Ideally, include some new information that could be of interest to them (bill cosponsors, new big endorsers, other indications of support for carbon pricing). Avoid resending the same message with "Reminder".

If they don't respond to several attempts, you need to decide the boundary between polite persistence and pestering. If possible, consider other routes. For example, is someone else on your team willing to step in and break the ice? Are you writing to the wrong person or at the wrong time?

What if they say "contact our trade group"? Ask them for an introduction! It could be a way of politely saying either "go away" or "I'm interested but don't have time or permission to work on this". Assume it's the latter and ask them for a quick email introduction to their contact at the trade group.

What if they say "we are a public service and not allowed to take a position on policy" or something similar? This is very common. Don't give up! You can say something like "we understand that you can't take a public position on federal legislation. We work with many such organisations. Some choose to approach our information as member education and leave it to the members to respond as they see fit." Then offer to do a presentation to their Board or a brown bag for employees/staff, or a blog/newsletter article. You may find that's all you get, but that's still great. Even better if your research enabled you to predict this obstacle and tailor your initial email accordingly.

Meet with your team regularly to share your progress and seek assistance with any roadblocks you may be facing.

Step 5: Engage

If steps 1 to 4 were good fun, step 5 is the best fun! Now you get to establish and grow your relationships towards support for your cause and other future bipartisan solutions.

Before the Meeting

Have a planning session a few days before the meeting, in person, by phone or Zoom. Two is company, three's okay. For most meetings, CCL reckons more than three is too many.

Will the meeting be in person or by phone/Zoom? In person is preferable, if possible, especially for smaller local companies. Phone/Zoom is okay, especially if it simplifies meeting logistics and allows a meeting to happen sooner.

Allocate the team roles for those who are attending. Since there are going to be fewer of you than a meeting with a Member of Parliament, people will have multiple roles. Also, the meeting is likely to be less formal, unless you are meeting with a CEO of a big company. We suggest the roles:

Leader: usually the "constituent" (in this case, the one who has the best relationship with them, or who contacted them for the meeting, or is overall most comfortable leading the meeting.)

Subject matter expert: this would be someone with above-average knowledge of either CCL/ACD or the industry your business is in. CCL can often provide a subject matter expert, to attend via phone/Zoom.

Appreciators: could be more than one person, as long as they are heartfelt.

Notetaker: note what did they ask to see, what did you promise to send. Don't need details like we do for MPs but still record in the system.

The asker: it's a good idea to have one person who is comfortable with this and knows about the options.

Follow upper: who sends the same-day "thank You" email, who sends the info they asked for or we promised.

At the Meeting

Start with the time check, introductions and appreciations. If the appreciations lead to a discussion about the organisation's relevant work, let them elaborate. Ask open ended questions and LISTEN; strive for 50-50 you listen, they listen. If possible, let them ask you about your policy. Discuss your asks and decide on possible next steps, ranging from "endorse right now" to "provide more information and meet again". Respond to business objections (e.g. Legal says we don't support lobby groups) calmly with prepared rebuttals.

Examples of CCL's current top asks

- We recognize that every company is unique, and what every company is able to do can differ. Accordingly, our ASK of companies is flexible, and we are eager to explore any ideas that come up.
- Publicly support the Australian Pollution Price (APP)
- Privately express support for the APP to your MP and Senators
- Attend meetings organised by CCL with Members of Parliament
- Educate people within your business and business network about the APP, and introduce us to other potential supporters

- Write (or co-author with CCL) a newspaper or magazine op-ed about your climate position and activities
- Co-sponsor or co-host a local business roundtable
- Become a member of CCL
- Let's stay in touch

After the Meeting

Immediately send a thank you note.

Later that day or a few days later, as promised, provide additional information.

Stay in touch, keep the relationship alive.

Grow the Relationship

Staying in touch

Regardless of whether your influencer agrees to take any lobbying action, it's important to keep the relationship alive. One of the easiest ways of doing this is with the occasional email. Share relevant news stories, updates on your policy position, including new endorsements. If you have an organisation newsletter, forward them that. Gradually encourage them to take stronger action.

Leveraging Support

Is your contact willing to join your next MP meeting, write a letter or record a short message? This is good publicity for your cause!

Measuring Success of Grasstops Lobbying

Good	Better (target)	Best
Private support	Public endorsement	Public + leverage endorsement
Sign a Leader's letter Sign our petition Talk to colleagues	Make an endorsement Pass a resolution Sign a declaration	Attend a lobby meeting Promote through media Other creative way!