



# Find Your Partners: Your community's voice is stronger when others are saying the same thing.

Cities rarely face legislative issues alone. A proposal affecting your city may also affect your schools, county, local businesses, employers, community organizations or residents. Coalition building doesn't have to mean creating a formal group or organizing a major advocacy effort. It can start with something much simpler: finding out who else cares about an issue and **having a conversation**.



## ■ Don't Wait Until You Need Them

The best time to build relationships with community partners is before an issue arises. Get to know your county supervisors, school board members, chamber leaders, local employers and other community stakeholders. You don't need a legislative agenda; start by learning about their priorities, challenges and what they're seeing in the community.

Look for easy opportunities to connect. Attend a chamber event. Invite a county supervisor to coffee. Introduce yourself to school leaders. Include local partners in a city tour or community event. Even an occasional check-in can build a relationship that makes the next conversation easier. The goal isn't to agree on everything. It's to know who you can call, and for them to know they can call you.

## ■ Start Here → Who Else Cares?

When an issue comes up at the statehouse, think beyond city hall. Ask yourself: Who else in my community could be affected by this? You don't need to know whether they agree with you before reaching out. That's what the conversation is for. Depending on the issue, that might include:

*Who else in my community could be affected by this?*

### Housing and Development:

- Builders
- Developers
- Realtors
- Employers
- Housing Organizations

### Property Taxes and Local Budgets:

- Counties
- Schools
- Chambers of Commerce
- Businesses
- Community Organizations

### Transportation and Public Safety:

- Law Enforcement
- Schools
- Emergency Responders
- Local Businesses

### Economic Development:

- Chambers
- Employers
- Developers
- Regional Economic Development Organizations

### Water and Infrastructure:

- Neighboring Communities
- Counties
- Utilities
- Businesses
- Other Local Stakeholder Groups

## It Starts With a Conversation

You don't need a formal meeting with a set agenda or an advocacy plan to get started. Pick up the phone, send an email, or bring the issue up the next time you see a community partner. And if you don't know them yet? This is a perfectly good reason to introduce yourself!

Try: "We're watching this proposal because it could affect \_\_\_\_\_. Would this affect you too? Would you like to discuss?"

Then listen. Understanding how the same proposal affects different parts of your community can help identify shared concerns — and potential partners.



## ■ 3 Easy Steps

### 1 Find out who else is affected.

Think about the people and organizations in your community, including those your city already works with. Who might share your concerns or benefit from the same policy change?

### 2 Compare notes.

Reach out and ask what they're seeing/hearing. You don't need to agree on everything. Look for the places where your interests overlap.

### 3 Speak up together. □

If you share a concern or goal, make sure your legislators hear it. A message coming from several different parts of the community can demonstrate that an issue reaches beyond city hall.

## ■ What Does "Together" Look Like?

There's no single way to advocate as a coalition, and it doesn't have to be complicated. Start with what works for you. Even informal coordination can make a difference.

### You might...

- Each call or email your legislators with the same basic message
- Sign onto a joint letter
- Attend a legislative forum together to voice your concerns
- Invite a legislator to meet with local stakeholders in your community
- Share examples of how the proposal would affect different organizations or residents
- Coordinate testimony or visit the Capitol when an issue warrants that level of attention

## ■ You Don't Have to Agree on Everything

A good partner on one issue may be on the other side of the next one. That's okay. Coalition building isn't about finding organizations that share every municipal priority. It's about recognizing when your interests overlap and working together on **that issue**. Maintaining relationships with local stakeholders, even when you disagree, makes it easier to pick up the phone next time you find yourselves on the same side.

*Recognize when your interests overlap and work together on **that issue**.*

## ■ Need Help Finding Partners?

You don't have to figure it out alone. The League's Government Affairs team can help identify organizations that may share your concerns, connect you with potential partners and coordinate advocacy on issues affecting Iowa's cities.

***Strong coalitions start with strong relationships. Build them before you need them, and when an issue arises, start by asking: "Who else cares?"***