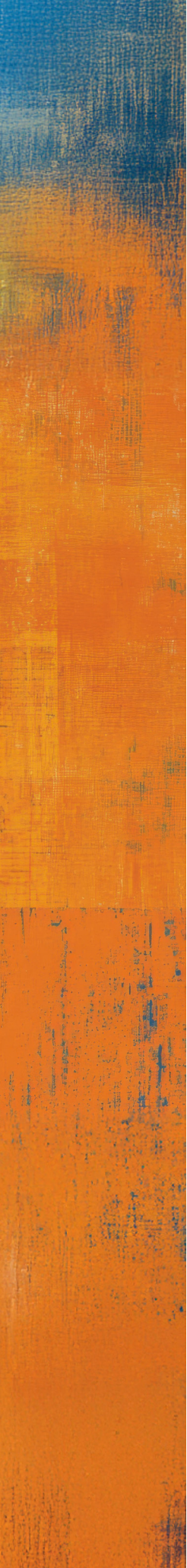


FOSTERING A CULTURE OF  
PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION:

# A Guide for Associations Engaging New Legislators and Their Members

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**A**ssociations play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between their members and policymakers. As new state and federal legislators take office, associations have an unparalleled opportunity to establish partnerships and open lines of communication.

Cultivating a culture of collaboration with these legislators is not only vital for advancing policy objectives but also for ensuring that members' voices are heard and represented, as both constituents and as experts in their fields.

Below are six suggested strategies associations can use to foster meaningful partnerships and effective communication with new legislators and their members.

## 1. Educate and Empower Legislators

New legislators often face steep learning curves, especially when addressing complex industry issues. Associations can serve as trusted resources by providing legislators with clear, concise, and actionable information.

### **Suggested Strategies:**

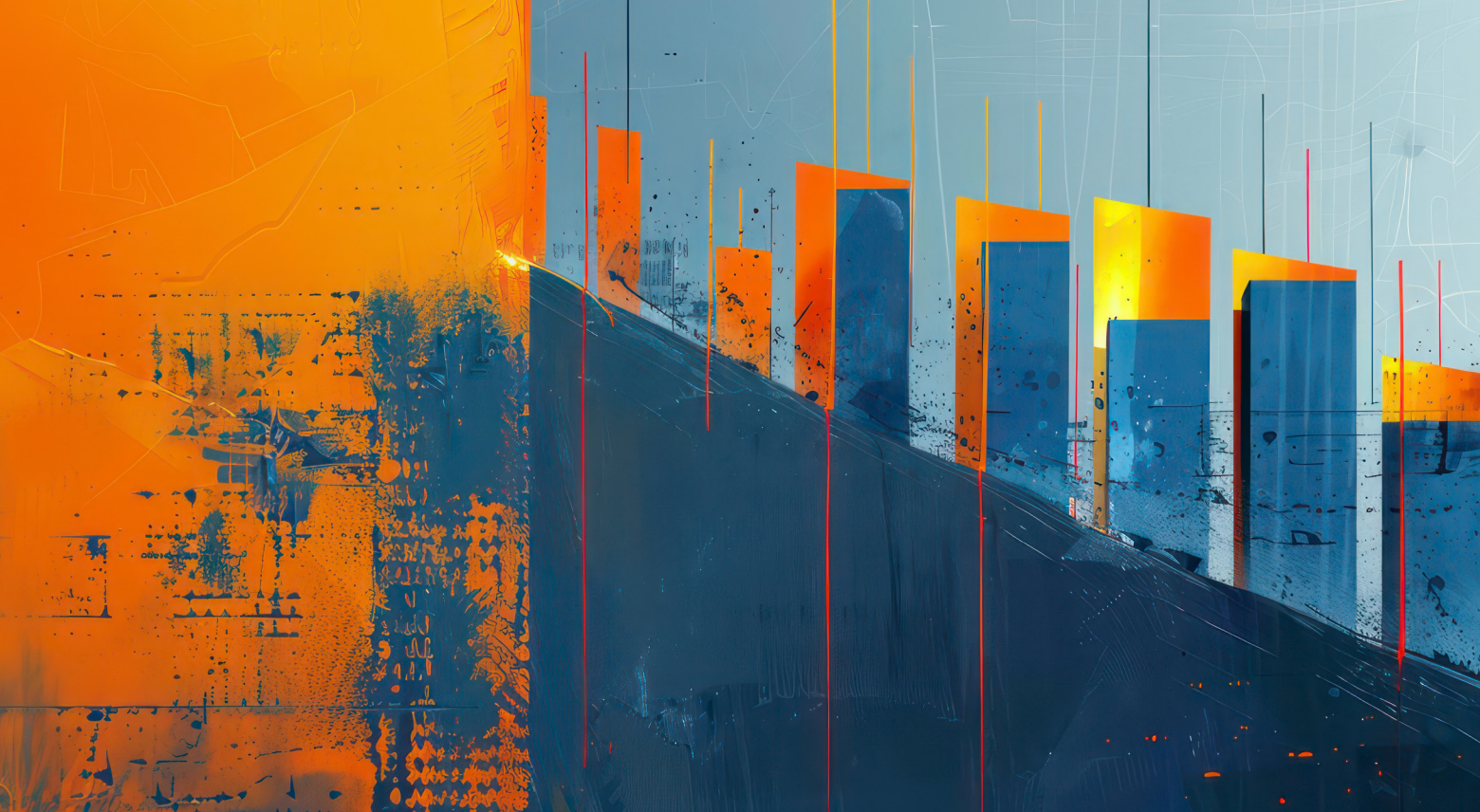
- **Host “Getting to Know Us” Sessions:** Invite legislators to attend meetings or webinars about the association’s mission, industry trends, and pressing concerns.
- **Develop Legislative Toolkits:** Equip legislators with comprehensive guides that include key statistics, industry challenges, and potential policy solutions.
- **Offer Subject-Matter Expertise:** Position your association as a go-to source for data, research, and expert opinions.

## 2. Engage Members in Advocacy Efforts

An association’s members are its most powerful advocates. To foster a culture of partnership, associations must empower their members to actively engage and build relationships with legislators.

### **Suggested Strategies:**

- **Advocacy Training Programs:** Teach members how to effectively communicate with policymakers through workshops and resources, like toolkits or sample calls to action and legislator letters that allow for member customization.
- **Legislative Days:** Organize in-district or capitol events where members can meet legislators, share their experiences, and advocate for policies that matter to them.
- **Personalized Storytelling:** Encourage members to share real-life stories that illustrate the impact of proposed legislation on their lives and professions.



### 3. Foster Member-to-Member Communication

Encouraging dialogue among members about legislative engagement strengthens advocacy efforts and promotes a culture of partnership.

**Suggested Strategies:**

- **Networking Opportunities:** Create spaces for members to share best practices and collaborate on advocacy initiatives, such as member-only discussion groups or list serves.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Pair experienced advocates with new members to guide them in building relationships with legislators.
- **Collaborative Committees:** Establish committees or task forces focused on legislative priorities, allowing members to work together on shared goals.

### 4. Emphasize Shared Goals and Mutual Benefits

Legislators are more likely to partner with associations when they see alignment between their policy goals and the association's mission. Associations should highlight how collaboration benefits all parties involved.

**Suggested Strategies:**

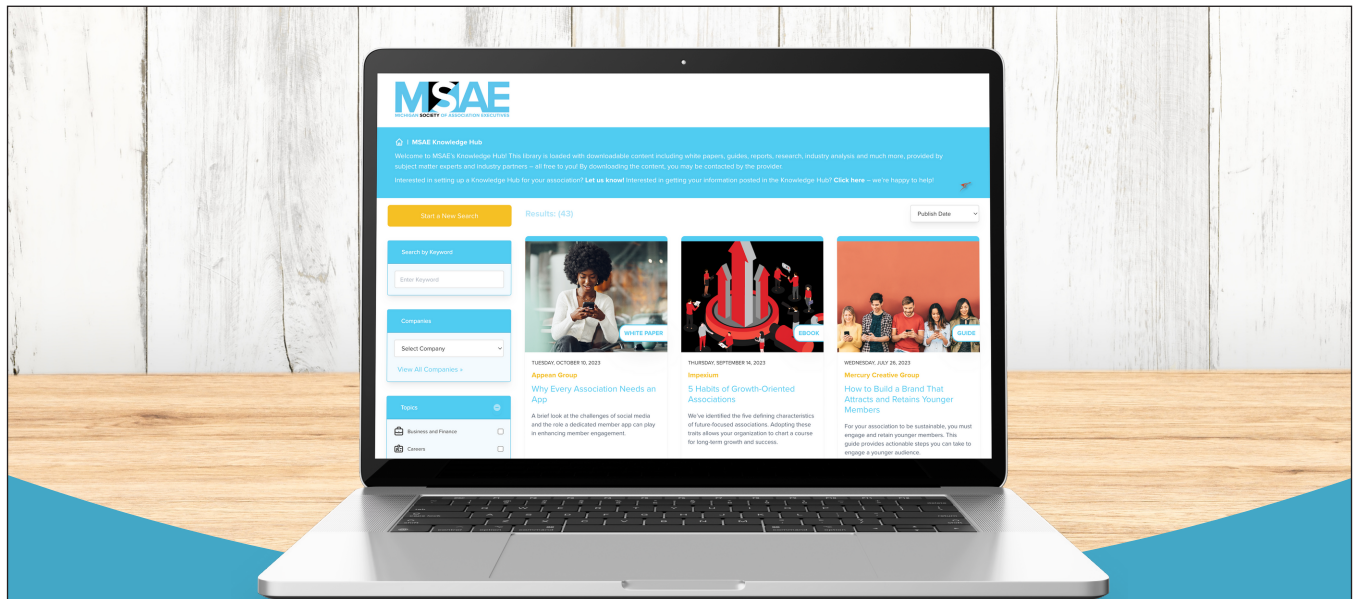
- **Focus on Community Impact:** Showcase how proposed policies will positively affect constituents and communities.
- **Present Win-Win Scenarios:** Frame advocacy efforts as opportunities for legislators to achieve their goals while supporting the association's objectives.
- **Acknowledge Legislative Successes:** Publicly recognize and celebrate legislators who champion policies that benefit the association and its members.

## 5. Create Two-Way Communication Channels

Open and consistent communication is the foundation of strong relationships. Associations should prioritize creating spaces for dialogue, both in-person and utilizing technology, where both legislators and members feel heard.

### Suggested Strategies:

- **Legislative Roundtables:** Organize regular meetings (quarterly or annually, in-person or virtually) that bring together legislators and association members to discuss shared goals and challenges.
- **Digital Communication Platforms:** Use email campaigns, newsletters, and social media to share advocacy messages, inform on industry updates and association initiatives, and engage directly with legislators and members.
- **Feedback Mechanisms and Data-Driven Insights:** Solicit input (e.g., surveys, polls) from legislators and members on advocacy priorities to ensure alignment and responsiveness; use analytics tools to track legislative interests and tailor communications accordingly.



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## 6. Build Relationships Beyond Advocacy

Partnerships with legislators should extend beyond lobbying for specific policies. Associations can deepen connections by engaging with lawmakers on broader community initiatives.

### Suggested Strategies:

- **Public Events:** Invite legislators to participate in association events, such as conferences, award ceremonies, or community service activities.
- **Community Projects:** Collaborate with legislators on initiatives that address local needs, such as workforce development or education programs.
- **Ongoing Support:** Offer continued resources and support to legislators throughout their terms, not just during legislative sessions.

In conclusion, by fostering a culture of partnership and communication with new and returning state and federal legislators, associations can amplify their advocacy efforts and strengthen their impact. Through education, open dialogue, member engagement, and collaborative initiatives, associations can position themselves as indispensable allies to lawmakers. These approaches ensure that both the association and its members have a meaningful voice in shaping policies that drive progress and benefit communities.

Want to learn more about how to create a culture of partnership with legislators or the work of Dykema Gossett PLLC? Contact Kate at [KHude@dykema.com](mailto:KHude@dykema.com).



### Meet Kate

**KATE HUDE** is the Senior Association Management Specialist/Staff Attorney overseeing the Government Solutions-Association Management group in Dykema's Lansing office, where she provides nonprofits legal services, association management, nonprofit consulting, and nonprofit advocacy services. Kate has a J.D. from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, a M.S. in Nonprofit Arts Administration from Boston University, and a B.F.A. in Theatre Design & Production from the University of Michigan.



### Meet Andrea

In her nearly 35 years of legislative and lobbying in Michigan's capital, **ANDREA CASCARILLA** has worked in virtually every policy and budget area for the State of Michigan. She has earned a reputation for being an effective policy and appropriations professional and is highly respected in Capitol circles. Andrea's areas of focus include education, healthcare, local government, economic development, procurement, professional licensing, transportation, environment, water, and clean energy matters.