



Libraries Engaged in VNRs

Part 5: Engage with Decision-Makers

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) can be a great way for libraries to engage in discussions around the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to be recognised for their contributions. This series offers ideas for key actions libraries and library associations can take to get involved.

The fifth step towards engagement in a Voluntary National Review (VNR) is to engage with decision-makers. This is very much the culmination of the work suggested in the previous three parts – preparing [stories](#), [data and facts](#), and [presenting things effectively](#). It is also a crucial one, given that in the end, the success of advocacy is measured in how far you manage to change the minds and actions of those in power.

We have already also talked about identifying [who is in charge](#). Now you have your evidence, it is a good time to contact them again (ideally in different ways if you don't immediately get a response), and to ask for the opportunity to present about how libraries are contributing to the SDGs, and – if you feel comfortable doing this – to make suggestions.

When you ask for the meeting, be clear about your goal, and emphasise the positive – how libraries are helping deliver development across the board. You should also be reasonable in the time you ask for, and unless it is urgent, not ask for anything in the very short term. Pay attention, also, to what the decision-maker may be interested in – if they are from the environment ministry, focus on green library initiatives. If they are from the economics ministry, talk about libraries and research for example.

You also do not need to limit yourself to the individual who is leading on the Voluntary National Review. You may want to try and meet the ministry or agency in charge of libraries and encourage them to use your materials to advocate on your behalf. Indeed, they may be more than happy to look like they are contributing to a major cross-government initiative.

It may also be the case that an individual meeting is not possible, but only participation in a broader consultation event. In this case, you should look at the agenda for this in advance, define your three key points (usually, people can't remember much more than this), and practice your interventions in advance in order to make most impact. You can also bring materials – full copies of your report, handouts or similar – in order to ensure that decision-makers you meet go away with something in their hands.

Active participation in a meeting may even open the possibility of a follow-up meeting, giving you more opportunity to make your point! Good luck, and let us know how you are getting on!