



Effective Date Sept 1st 2015

Lobbying Policy

v 1.0

Introduction

This policy statement covers all lobbying activities of BeLonG To Youth Services in the furtherance of its mission to:

- a) Provide support and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender young people and families in need.
- b) To promote and advance the wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender young people and their families whose lives have been affected by homophobia, transphobia, social exclusion, discrimination or other disadvantage, by fostering a culture of inclusiveness, equality & human rights.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that BeLonG To Youth Services is transparent about its lobbying activities and that the organisation complies with its obligations under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015.

This policy applies to all Board Members, Staff Members, Volunteers, Students & Interns.

Requirement to Register

The Act requires that advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations and charities which have at least 1 full time employee and carry out a '*relevant communication*' with a '*designated public official*' about a '*relevant matter*' are obliged to register as a lobbyist with the Standards in Public Office Commission.

Following an assessment of BeLonG To's lobbying activities we have deemed that BeLonG To meets the criteria established by the Act to oblige us to register.

It is a contravention of the Act to carry on lobbying activities without being registered.

Accountability

- Each Manager is responsible for compliance with the lobbying policy (together with the legislation and other related policies as set out in this policy statement).
- Each Manager is responsible for ensuring the BeLonG To's lobbying activities are transparent and reported on in full.
- Each Manager is responsible for the completion of lobbying reports and submission of same to the Office Manager within 2 working days of the lobbying activity occurring.
- The Office Manager is responsible for the processing of lobbying reports and submission of the lobbying returns to the lobbying register in line with the established procedures as set out by SIPO.
- The Office Manager is responsible for the provision of advice and guidance to Managers in relation to the lobbying policy and reporting procedures. Queries should be submitted to the Office Manager as they arise.
- Failure of adhere to the Lobbying Policy may result in disciplinary action.

Relevant Communications

A relevant communication is a communication that:

- May be written or oral
- Is made personally (directly or indirectly)
- Is made to a designated public official¹
- Relates to a relevant matter
- Is not an excepted communication²

Relevant Matters

A relevant matter is any matter relating to:

- The initiation, development or modification of any public policy or of any public program (for example proposals for changes in the national strategy for the prevention of suicide, proposals for changes in the national drugs strategy, proposals for changing entitlement to health services)

¹ Appendix 1 - List of Designated Public Officials (DPO's)

² Appendix 2 - Schedule of Excepted Communications

- The preparation or amendment of any law (including secondary legislation such as statutory instruments and bye-laws) *(for example, proposals to change the gender recognition bill, proposals to change bye-laws relating to traffic)*
- The award of any grant, loan or other financial support, contact or other agreement, or of any licence or other authorisation involving public funds *(for example, meeting to brief a designated public official on the need for further investment in BeLonG To's mental health services)*

APART FROM the implementation of any such policy, program, enactment or award of any matter of a technical nature.

(For example, communications relating to the development of criteria for schemes of housing grants, development of criteria for selecting builders to build schools or development of criteria for the awarding of a licence to provide transport on a specific route would be regarded as lobbying activity. The implementation of those grant schemes (the assessment of whether or not an individual would qualify) or licence competitions, or the implementation of tender processes through e-tenders would be regarded as implementation matters.)

Doubtful Need to Report

Where a genuine doubt arises about the requirement to report on a lobbying activity arises a lobbying report should be completed in the normal fashion and submitted to the Office Manager with the check box for 'doubtful report' ticked. The Office Manager will review the report, liaise with SIPO as required and report back to the submitting individual on the correct manner in which to proceed in future.

Lobbying Report

Each individual engaged with lobbying on behalf of the organisation is responsible for the completion of a lobbying report within 2 working days of the occurrence of the lobbying activity on BeLonG To's Internal Register of Lobbying Activities.

Reports are completed by way of an online form located at:

<http://goo.gl/forms/TbC9x5NAuR>

Reporting to the Board of Directors

A copy of each submission to the Lobbying Register shall be tabled before the Board of Directors once per year. Together with an overview report regarding the implementation of this policy to include the number of lobbying activities submitted more than 2 days after the activity occurred and the determinations on any doubtful reports.

Policy Review

This policy statement/ procedure shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the Office Manager together with the Board of Directors. More frequent reviews may take place if deemed warranted. This procedure will be reviewed in line with current legal obligations and standards of good practice.

Review Date: August 2016

Appendix 1 - List of Designated Public Officials (DPO's)

- Ministers of the Government and Ministers of State
- Other members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann
- Members of the European Parliament for the three constituencies in Ireland
- Members of local authorities
- Special advisers
- Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General of Government departments, Chief Executive Officers and Directors of Services in local authorities

The Act provides for other public servants to be prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform over time by way of Ministerial order.

All public bodies are obliged to publish the names of their employees who are designated public officials and a brief description of their roles and responsibilities for the purposes of the Act. When in doubt the published list from the relevant public body should be consulted to ascertain whether an individual with whom you wish to meet is a designated public official.

Appendix 2 - Schedule of Excepted Communications

The following are “excepted communications” and, therefore, are not regarded as lobbying (they are not [relevant communications](#)):

- **Private affairs:** Communications by or on behalf of an individual relating to his or her private affairs unless they relate to the development or zoning of any land (for example, communications in relation to your eligibility for, or entitlement to, a social welfare payment, a local authority house, a medical card are not relevant communications). Detailed guidelines on lobbying in relation to development and zoning of land are available [here](#)
- **Diplomatic relations:** Communications by or on behalf of a foreign country or territory, the European Union, the United Nations or any other international intergovernmental organisation
- **Factual information:** Communications requesting factual information or providing factual information in response to a request for the information (for example, a company asking a public servant how to qualify for an enterprise grant and getting an answer; a person asking about the rules in relation to planning and getting an answer; factual information provided to a government department by a representative body in response to a request from the department)
- **Published submissions:** Communications requested by a public service body and published by it (for example, submissions received in response to a public consultation process which are subsequently published by the public body.)
- **Trade union negotiations:** Communications forming part of, or directly related to, negotiations on terms and conditions of employment undertaken by representatives of a trade union on behalf of its members
- **Safety and security:** Communications the disclosure of which could pose a threat to the safety of any person or to the security of the State
- **Oireachtas committees:** Communications which are made in proceedings of a committee of either House of the Oireachtas

- **Communications by designated public officials or public servants:** Communications by a [designated public official](#) in his or her capacity as such; communications by public servants (or those engaged on contract by a public service body) made in that capacity and relating to the functions of the public service body. Public servants are employed by or hold office in public service bodies - in general, these are State bodies other than commercial State bodies. The list of such bodies is available [here](#). The list of commercial state bodies which are not included is available [here](#). (For example, communications by county councillors to local authority managers or other public servants does not constitute lobbying.)
- **Governance of commercial State bodies:** Communications by or on behalf of a commercial State body made to a Minister of the Government who holds shares in, or has statutory functions in relation to, the body, or to designated public officials serving in the Minister's department, in the ordinary course of the business of the body (for example, certain communications involving Bus Éireann and the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport)
- **Policy working groups:** Communications between members of a relevant body appointed by a Minister, or by a public service body, for the purpose of reviewing, assessing or analysing any issue of public policy with a view to reporting to the Minister or public service body on it. A relevant body is one whose members are appointed by a Minister or by a public service body and the members include one or more designated public officials and one or more who are not public servants nor engaged for the purposes of a public service body provided it conducts its activities in accordance with the Transparency Code (for example, expert groups, working groups, review groups or commissions whose members include designated public servants and some non-public servants established to examine and report on specific issues).