



# Best Practices for Building a Productive Working Relationship with State Medical Societies and Others

This document incorporates advice from seasoned legislative liaisons to help you build strategic partnerships with provider organizations in your state, learn to leverage your combined expertise, and enhance your collective ability to advocate for shared issues impacting providers.

## Remember that relationships with provider organizations vary

Many state MGMA's have a long history of cohesive partnering with their state medical societies, while in other states the two groups may work more independently. If your state MGMA does have a productive, ongoing relationship with a provider organization, make sure to take advantage of these existing ties and work to maintain the relationship through periodic outreach. If this scenario doesn't apply, remember that it only takes one person to reach out and re-establish a great working relationship, or to set one in motion.

## Get involved early

Take advantage of existing ties that former state leaders or other colleagues have already accrued by reaching out to introduce yourself sooner rather than later. It's even better if you can have the mutual acquaintance make an introduction for you. You may also want to consider attending networking events or fundraisers for other healthcare professional organizations. This can be a great way to build your network and make some useful contacts to reach out to down the road.

## Combine your strengths

As a practice administrator, you have valuable insight into the business and management side of a medical practice, while physicians have a unique care delivery perspective. Your combined voices provide a well-rounded picture of the realities of healthcare at the ground level, which lawmakers find extremely valuable. Putting regulatory and policy changes in the context of both practical business outcomes and physician and patient implications strengthens your overall message.

## Touch base regularly

As with any successful working relationship, regular communication is critical. Even if you don't see eye-to-eye or need to collaborate on an issue, reaching out as a courtesy to keep provider groups with whom you frequently partner apprised of your organization's progress on an issue can help to foster the partnership and ensure the favor is returned in the future. Reaching out can also provide you with valuable new information or perspective on a topic you may not otherwise have had.

## Leverage your resources strategically

Your association only has a finite amount of resources and sometimes the key to success is knowing where to strategically invest time, money and energy where it will have the greatest return. Perhaps opt not to collaborate or allow a provider organization to take the lead on issues that may have less relevance to your members. Channel your resources toward issues where your involvement would have the most noticeable impact.



## **Don't forget about grassroots**

The benefits from teaming up with state medical societies and other provider organizations isn't limited to direct lobbying efforts. It can also be extremely valuable for expanding your base for grassroots messaging or partnering to host joint events.

## **Don't limit your connections**

Besides state medical societies, there could be a wide assortment of other organizations that would also make great strategic partners. Examples might include payer administrative committees, hospital organizations, business administrative associations, and patient-rights organizations. Don't be afraid to think outside the box when building a coalition.

## **Pass on what you've learned**

Cultivating a meaningful working relationship with other associations and organizations takes time. Don't let all of this hard work go to waste when an individual volunteer leaves the legislative liaison role. Try to write down helpful advice in a handbook and take time to introduce colleagues to helpful contacts you've acquired over the years. Understand there's strength in numbers and that building relationships across multiple staff helps to strengthen the relationships your state MGMA has built with provider organizations to ensure their endurance moving forward.