



Building or Bolstering your Government Affairs Function

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STRATEGY · STRUCTURE · OPERATING MODEL · METRICS

What a government affairs team does



Advocacy

Advance and protect the organization's interests in legislative and executive arenas.



Policy Monitoring

Track bills, rules, and regulatory shifts, then translate them into business impact.



Relationships

Build trusted ties with policymakers, staff, and allies before they are needed.



Education

Tell the company's story so decision-makers understand who you are and why it matters.



Regulatory Affairs

Engage agencies on rulemakings, comment letters, and compliance-shaping decisions.



Political Engagement

Run the PAC, coalitions, and grassroots that convert goodwill into influence.

The building blocks of a GA program

A complete program combines a number of important capabilities. Start with strategy and intelligence, then layer on the engagement muscles as the team matures.



01

Strategy & Priorities

A short list of issues that actually move the business.



02

Issue Intelligence

Monitoring and analysis that turns noise into early signals.



03

Direct Lobbying

Engaging legislators and executive-branch decision-makers.



04

Coalition Building

Multiplying voice through partners and trade groups.



05

Grassroots & Grasstops

Mobilizing employees, customers, and local advocates.



06

PAC & Political Giving

Compliant political engagement that builds access.



07

Education & Storytelling

Making a clear, memorable case for your position.

WHERE IT REPORTS

Where the function should sit

There is no single right answer. A survey of 200 professionals found the function splits almost evenly between two homes.

Corporate Affairs / Communications



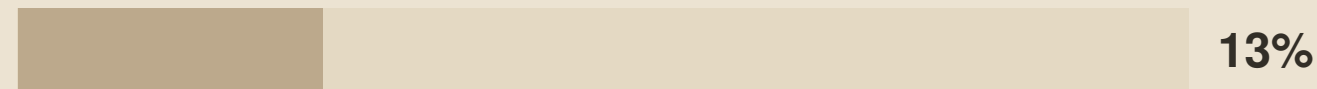
Story-led, reputation-first, cross-functional agility.

Legal / General Counsel



Risk-led, compliance-anchored, regulatory depth.

Elsewhere (Strategy, CEO, BU)



Tailored to a specific business or founder priority.

Source: DHR Global LinkedIn survey (200 professionals).

HOW TO DECIDE

- 1 Are your top risks regulatory or reputational?
- 2 Where does the CEO already turn for policy calls?
- 3 Do you need legal privilege on sensitive matters?
- 4 Which leader can open doors in government?

How to structure the team



Start lean: one leader wearing several hats, then add specialists as issue load grows.

How the work actually flows



A continuous loop — insights from measurement feed the next round of priorities.

Map who you serve and who you influence



Internal — who you serve

- **C-suite & Board** set risk appetite and priorities
- **Business units** surface the issues that hit revenue
- **Legal & Compliance** partner on risk and disclosure
- **Communications** align message and reputation
- **Finance** fund the function, track ROI



External — who you influence

- **Legislators & staff** the decision-makers and gatekeepers
- **Regulators & agencies** rulemaking and enforcement
- **Trade associations** shared-voice coalitions
- **Think tanks & academics** credibility and evidence
- **Media & the public** shape the climate of opinion

Build influence through PACs and coalitions



Political Action Committee

- Register and administer a compliant PAC
- Solicit eligible employees, set giving criteria
- File disclosures on time — every time



Coalitions & Alliances

- Join issue coalitions to amplify your voice
- Lead where your stake is largest
- Share cost and credibility with partners



Grassroots & Trade Groups

- Activate employees and customers as advocates
- Leverage trade-association memberships
- Turn local relationships into national reach

Measure what moves the needle



Legislative Win Rate

priority bills advanced
÷ total priority bills tracked



Bills Supported Passed

% of backed measures
that became law or advanced



Threats Blocked

% of opposed measures
stopped or amended favorably



Engagement Volume

meetings, testimony,
comment letters, coalition
actions

Report outcomes, not activity. Turn “we monitored 200 bills” into “we moved 18 high-priority bills forward” — the number that earns a bigger seat at the strategy table. This can be challenging – getting legislative and/or regulatory wins are difficult.

What it takes to fund the function



People

In-house leaders and specialists — the largest and highest-leverage line.



Outside Counsel & Lobbyists

Retained firms for reach, surge capacity, and local expertise.



Tools & Intelligence

Legislative tracking, CRM, and analytics software.



Memberships & PAC

Trade-association dues, coalition fees, and PAC operations.

BUILD vs. BUY

Most companies blend both. Anchor strategy and relationships in-house; rent reach and specialty expertise.

Keep in-house

Strategy, priorities, key relationships, PAC governance

Outsource

State coverage, surge lobbying, niche technical issues

Reframe the ask

Position GA as a value driver, not a cost center

Five things to get right

- 01 Justify the function in business terms — earnings at stake, risk managed, value created. Make sure they understand what threats exist and how the GA team is engaging.
- 02 Pick a reporting home deliberately: reputation-led in Corporate Affairs, or risk-led in Legal.
- 03 Start lean, then structure by federal, state, policy, political, and operations as you grow.
- 04 Run a disciplined loop: monitor, position, engage, measure — and build relationships early. Internal and external relationships are both important.
- 05 Report outcomes, not activity, so government affairs earns its seat at the strategy table. Communication is key. Work with your comms team to get the word out.

Government affairs is not insurance you buy for a crisis — it is a capability you build before one.