

Federal Advocacy Quickstart Guide

1. Develop your Agenda

- ◆ Establish your advocacy goals: what kind of legislative action will benefit your community?
- ◆ Keep track of important opportunities for action – legislation introduced in Congress, critical stages in the budget process
- ◆ Are you advocating on behalf of an organization or as an individual? Make sure you understand and follow the IRS rules for lobbying on behalf of your non-profit organization.
- ◆ Collect information, data, and stories that explain the issue and support the action you are advocating for

2. Identify Your Audience

- ◆ Senators, Representatives, key Congressional committee members.
- ◆ Research and follow your audience. Do they support your agenda or will they need some convincing? What is their voting record on your key issues?
- ◆ Stay on top of any changes in who your representatives are

3. Engage with your Audience

- ◆ Schedule meetings – this is the best start for building a productive relationship
 - Meetings can be conducted in person (in DC or at their local office) or online.
 - Request a meeting with a 2-4 week lead time
 - Meetings give you the opportunity to advocate for your full agenda and educate about issue areas
- ◆ Emails and phone calls: Suitable for influencing current critical legislative initiatives and building upon your relationship

4. Conduct a successful meeting

- ◆ Decide who should attend: organizational staff/representatives, residents, community members
- ◆ Create a meeting agenda with designated speaking roles (expect the meeting to last 20-30 minutes)
- ◆ Confirm the meeting 24 hours ahead and send materials for your audience to review in advance. Bring print materials to share at the meeting.
- ◆ Present the issue and solution: paint a compelling picture, tell a story from your community, educate your audience about solutions.
- ◆ Make a clear request: support for a bill, commit to maintaining/increasing funding for a federal program, etc. (This does constitute as lobbying, and is not always necessary for a successful advocacy meeting.)
- ◆ You don't need to be an expert. If you are unable to answer a question, let them know you'll follow up with more information.

5. Foster the Relationship

- ◆ Follow up with thank you notes, additional information, photos from the meeting, etc.
- ◆ Invite to a local community event, tour of your program, or other opportunities to showcase your work
- ◆ Stay in touch: send new information as it becomes available, share achievements made possible by their support, etc

6. Stay Informed

- ◆ Follow Grounded Solutions Network to stay informed about important policy updates and calls to action!
- ◆ Sign up for our newsletter and eblast lists.