

PLANNING AN ADVOCACY [LEGISLATIVE] VISIT

GETTING THE MEETING

- Email the person you want to influence. Email is best for briefly introducing your issue and creating a record of the interaction to refer back to. WhatsApp, text, and other social media can also be useful for reaching out when internet connections are unavailable.
- In your introductory contact, say who you are, define the issue you care about (and why it matters to you), and explain why you want to meet. Use a local or national statistic, report, or recent article in the newspaper to help make your case for the meeting. Thank them.
- If they write or text back and agree to a meeting, write or text back immediately. Thank them again.
- Put the meeting on your calendar. You should know how long it is and whether you should bring other youth leaders. If you don't know, write again and ask for clarification.
- If the person fails to respond to your email. Call them. Have a very short script for the phone call: who you are and that you are calling to follow up on an email. You would like to meet to discuss this issue. Short, assertive, and clear.
- If the person declines to meet with you, think about who can influence them to change their mind and meet with you. Then start with step one again, email that person.
- If you have an idea about an equally influential person to meet with, start with step one again.

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- After you get a commitment to the meeting, think about the best place for it. Is there someplace meaningful in the community that would be best? Is somewhere close to the person you want to meet best to ensure their ability to get there? Can you pick a meeting place that is meaningful and easy to access, where it is easy to hear each other's stories, concerns, or issues?
- When planning your visit, consider everything that matters to this person: their reputation, getting re-elected, whether the agency's doing its job well, their business, and anything that you can think about to move them to listen or change.
- Consider your strategies: Will this person be impressed if I have data? Should I bring a report or a book of stories by youth that illustrate the problem? Is this person more likely to be moved by several of us telling personal stories than research points? Is this person impressed if I dress in business attire? Or will this person be moved by seeing me as I am in my day-to-day life? How can I connect? How can I help them see and hear me?
- Now, it's time to create your script. You won't read from this, but you will know it in your heart and mind so you can speak freely with the person you want to influence. Your script should include:
 - Your passion for this issue.
 - Data on the problem.
 - Your idea for change, with evidence that this is a good solution.
 - Stories or evidence about how this has worked.
 - Visioning stories about how different life could be with this change.
 - A specific request: what do we want this person to do, stop doing, or take on?

CONDUCTING THE MEETING

- On the day of the meeting: Arrive 15 minutes early. Everyone coming should know their role and their part in the script. Pick one person to facilitate who will nod to each person in the group to share their piece of the advocacy strategy as the conversation unfolds.
- LISTEN to this person who has dedicated time to your meeting. Are they ...
 - A lost cause. They will never support us; we need to move on.
 - Saying no because of some barrier, but it's clear they want to help. This is an important person to work with over time. Stay in the conversation.
 - Saying no because it's clear that they do not know enough. This is also a great person to work with over time. Express faith in them and tell them you can supply them with data and evidence to support your position.
 - Saying yes to get you out of their office? Get a commitment to act in some way before you leave.
 - Saying yes, and they seem to get it? This person could become a champion. This meeting is step one; you should listen closely to everything this person says.
 - The important thing is to listen as well as speak. Try to assess who this person is and how they might become a supporter. What does that path look like?
 - Make a request as you finish: What is the best next step? What can they commit to? How can you stay connected?
 - Thank the person, no matter how the meeting has gone.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING

- Assess your performance:
 - Lead with praise—what did I/we do well?
 - What were the highlights of the meeting? Where did we see openings?
 - What info did we lack that could have improved the meeting?
 - How can we get more training on this?
 - Where can we go to get more information or evidence?
 - What did we learn about this person and what has to happen to gain their support?
 - How can we remove barriers to grow this person's support?
 - Are they worth it? Is this person a key gatekeeper or decision-maker on our issue?
 - What should we do next to influence this person?
 - Create your to-do list for ongoing work with this person. What's next?
 - Be sure to thank them for their time and outline the next steps.
 - Celebrate with your teammates. We did it!