

## How to Arrange a Site Visit or an In-District Meeting with Your Elected Official

Hosting a site visit or meeting your Legislator in their home district office is the key way to engage them in the fight to fund afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs. Site visits and in-district meetings show your Legislator what is happening in their community, what is working well, and what still needs to be done to improve programs. Also, as elected offices change, a site visit or in-district meeting serves as a good “get to know us” strategy.

### Steps to Take to Arrange the Visit:

#### *Before Visit*

1.  Always research first. Find out more about your legislators (what committees they are part of, policy issues they are passionate about, etc.) and their involvement in the community. You can connect better with legislators when you know what they are interested in.
2.  Call the local office for your elected official and ask to speak with the elected official’s scheduler.
3.  Share your plans with the scheduler.
  - a. If you are hosting a site visit, share the date, time, and location with the scheduler.
  - b. If you are asking to arrange an in-district meeting, have a few options for dates and times.
4.  Work with your staff and the students in your program to prepare for the visit.
  - a. Site-visit: host a hands-on program that will be engaging to the elected official. You can also have programming that may showcase an area of interest for that elected official (ex: STEM).
  - b. District meeting: designate roles to the students and staff attending the meeting with you. Practice your roles at least 3 times before attending the meeting.
5.  If you are hosting a site visit, don’t forget to alert the local media about the event. The Network can also help you reach out to local media outlets.

#### *During Visit*

6.  If you are hosting a site visit, make sure you have someone waiting at the entrance to your site to greet all event attendees and help direct them to the location of the site visit.
7.  At both site visits and in-district meetings, make sure the students get to speak about their experiences at your program. When the students have shared their stories, share yours. Elected officials love to hear personal stories about their constituents.

## *After Visit*

8.  After your site visit or in-district meeting, Tweet or post site visit and in-district meeting photos online and tag your elected official. This is a very quick and easy way to share the event with the public and also engage with your elected official online.
9.  Send a thank you note to the Legislator or the staffer who attended your event or who you met with.
10.  Complete any necessary follow-ups (ex: sending more information about your program, answering any questions that may have come up during the meeting or the site visit, etc.).

## **TIPS**

### *Before Visit*

- Do not get discouraged if the scheduler wants to send a staffer instead of the elected official. Staffers are the key to the Legislator - it is very common for staffers to influence the elected official's decisions on legislation. Staffers also tend to be the boots on the ground for the elected official they work for and have a large presence in the community.
- Know what funding stream your afterschool program is part of. Be knowledgeable of how it works and who to talk to about what.
- Consider what legislators are looking to get from the visit (PR, Community involvement, etc.).
- Be prepared, but don't overthink the visit.
- Notify the appropriate authority (superintendent, principal, supervisor, etc.) and include the agenda of the upcoming visit as a courtesy. Remember that this is your meeting, and so you must strategize with them on when and how to participate if they are interested.
- Sometimes, to maximize the visit experience, it might be better to coordinate with other community-based organizations when hosting a legislator.

### *During Visit*

- Explain how your program works, including what could make it a high-quality program. Don't make assumptions about what legislators know or do not know about your program.
- Focus on a highlight of your program, but make it simple so that conversations can flow organically.
- Be authentic in your approach and responses during the visit.
- Have a packet of information (about the program, etc.) for them to take along.
- Present other relevant event opportunities to legislators.

### *After Visit*

- Using social media can be considered lobbying, so be careful about what you post if you don't have lobbying funds. Without lobbying, you can and should thank the elected official for visiting your program and post

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about what they did while there, but be careful about directly asking for support. Also note that additional rules apply if the elected is running for office.

- You can send a “thank you” note with group photo of participants and the legislator attached.

**Sample Schedule:**

**3:00 p.m.** Local leader arrives at the program and is greeted by the program director or other lead host.

**3:05-3:15 p.m.** Lead the local leader on a tour of the facilities. Let them see what activities the youth are engaged in.

**3:15-3:30 p.m.** Afterschool snack time! Let the local leader enjoy a snack, if your meal program allows, and talk with the children about their favorite parts of the program. Ask the kids where they would be if they did not attend afterschool or what their friends do after school.

**3:30-3:45 p.m.** After the snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and the local leader. Ask the parents to explain how the afterschool program helps their families.

**3:45-4:00 p.m.** Ask the principal or superintendent to talk about school-wide improvement attributable to the afterschool program. For example, ask the principal to show the local leader the school's improved assessment scores.

**4:00 p.m.** Thank you and goodbye!

**Timeline:**

1 month	Invite local leader.
3 weeks	Invite parents, community members, school officials, and youth.
2 weeks	Develop schedule for the day; identify roles.
1 week	Finalize program agenda.
3 days	Call local leader’s office to confirm visit.
2 days	Invite the media.