



### **Why host a site visit?**

Hosting a site visit is one of the most effective ways to showcase the work you do in your sector. Members of Congress want to hear from and meet with their constituents, and a site visit will allow them to see firsthand the work you are doing in your community/state.

Make sure to invite people from your community who have been directly impacted by the work that you do. This will provide direct insight to your member. Hosting a site visit will also help you build relationships with members of Congress, create positive publicity for your foundation, empower your community, showcase innovative projects you're working on, and get you involved in advocacy without traveling to Washington, D.C.

### **When should you host a site visit?**

The best time to host a site visit is when your member is home during a Congressional recess, which occurs during the month of August and around various holidays throughout the year. Visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) for dates (subject to change). It's also important to add them to your mailing list and invite them to events that you host. Make sure to also invite your members' district staff— if the member cannot attend, their staff will most likely attend on their behalf. District staff's job is to keep them informed about what's going on in the community, so staff are the eyes and ears for the member. It's important to develop relationships with them, as well.

### **What type of site visit will you host?**

- There are many types of visits including, but not limited to, a visit to your office, ribbon cutting, annual meetings, luncheons, and visit to a site of a grantee to demonstrate the direct impact you have had. Think outside the box—there are many ways to educate your legislator on what you do. Try to pick a site visit that will highlight the work that you do best while also relating it to issues that are of interest to your member.

### **Planning the site visit**

After you've decided where to host your site visit, you will need to contact your member of Congress. But you don't have to stop there. You can invite multiple legislators, senators, and representatives for your state, as well as local and state officials.

### **Before your site visit**

- Contact your member's [scheduler](#) to schedule the site visit. **Be persistent!**
- After you've scheduled your event, make sure to follow up a couple of weeks before and the day before with the scheduler.
- Prepare a one-page fact sheet about your foundation to give to your member.

- Know your legislator. Review his/her biography. Learn their party affiliation, committee and subcommittee membership, and past record on the issues you will be discussing. Knowing these facts will help guide your discussion and demonstrate that you have adequately prepared for the visit.
- Be prepared to explain how your organization affects voters in their district.
- Coordinate the day, but be flexible with your time. Members of Congress may be late or forced to cancel the meeting due to conflicts. If your member has to cancel their meeting, don't be discouraged and make sure to still extend the invitation to staff.
- Create an agenda or schedule for the visit.

### **During the site visit**

- Make sure to introduce yourself, explain what your organization does, and the impact you've had in the legislator's district.
- Allow the member time to tour the site, meet with constituents, and speak for a few minutes. Leave time for Q&A.
- During the site visit, offer yourself as resource. Make sure to give the member and staff your business card as well as one-page fact sheet about your foundation. Steer away from leave-behind folders overloaded with info that your member may not have time to read, but feel free to tell them to contact you if they would like more information.
- Legislators and staff usually know little or nothing about our issues. Be sure to explain all acronyms, programs, and funding sources.
- Put a community face on political issues. Legislators want to represent the best interests of their district or state so wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the legislator's constituency. This makes the perspectives and attendance of grantees or people in your community even more valuable.

### **Media**

You may want to invite media to your site visit, but always check with your member's office for permission first. If you need help scheduling a meeting, please view the media [tools](#) on the District Days' website or contact Council staff for help.

### **Follow-up**

- **Make sure to send a thank-you letter** to your member of Congress and their staff within a week of your meeting. We encourage you to fax or e-mail it since regular mail can take up to a month to be delivered.
- **Add members of Congress to your mailing list.** This will enable them to receive copies of your annual report, newsletters, and other materials.
- **Send a press release to your local media office** about the upcoming meeting or event with your lawmaker. If you have pictures with your representative and/or senator, enclose those too.

- **Follow up with the Council on Foundations.** We track the relationships between foundations and members of Congress. If you participated in District Days or recently met with a member of Congress, please fill out a meeting report form.

Feel free to contact the Council's Government Relations staff at [govt@cof.org](mailto:govt@cof.org) or 703-879-0600 if you have any questions.