

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Elected officials have direct jurisdiction over response and recovery efforts during disasters or disease events. These tips are intended to help you when addressing elected officials who can influence - and benefit from - the development of an industry coalition.

Understanding where your organization fits into an elected official's agenda will be key before setting up an appointment with them. Further, assessing their jurisdictional authority as it relates to your business and your business impact to the shared community is a good starting point for discussion with officials.

1. **Do your homework.** Determine the appropriate amount of time that you and/or coalition leadership will need to succinctly make your case. Remember, elected officials often are on tight schedules, and have limited time and competing interests. Think about the benefits that your coalition may offer to your elected official and community, and relay these benefits to them. Determine where your spheres of influence may overlap and how both parties can come together to achieve mutual goals.
2. **Be on time and respectful.** Most officials have limited time between appointments, if any. Showing up on time - or better yet, a little early - is an easy way to start the meeting off on the right foot, show your elected official that you respect their time, and start building trust with them. If you are running late for a set meeting, call ahead to let them know and be as flexible and gracious as possible when rescheduling. Additionally, be mindful of the number of people that you choose to send to the meeting, as space may be limited in the official's office and you don't want to overwhelm them.
3. **Establish a connection.** Officials like to understand where people live to begin establishing connections with visitors, community supporters, or constituents. Clearly demonstrate the relevance of the topic you are presenting to that official's authority, responsibilities, or district.
4. **Show interest.** Each official will have their own unique responsibilities and areas of expertise, so be open to any ideas that they may have and be respectful of differences in thought or opinion. Oftentimes, opposing viewpoints can foster important changes and good ideas. Relate the work of the coalition back to on-going or evolving events in your community, and show genuine appreciation for their time, support, and advice.
5. **Be prepared to answer questions.** Answer questions clearly and concisely and have data available to back up your answers, if possible. If you are unable to answer any of the official's questions, be sure to take thorough notes on what they are asking so that you can follow up with an answer later through the appropriate communication channels.