



Connecting with Policy Makers

Telling a story that can be used

Mike Barnett
Boston College
barnetge@bc.edu
@mike_barnett_BC

Step 1: Plan and get appointment

- ▶ Find out who in your group/state is going and what districts they represent (target these)
- ▶ Get the appointments
 - ▶ Useful to try to group the house members together and the Senate members together...
 - ▶ Long walk between the buildings so if you do just be sure to give yourself enough time to get to each appointment... they can be late... you can't...
- ▶ Usually can just e-mail the office and request a meeting (some members have an on-line form) or call the office and they can get you the information for the member's scheduler
 - ▶ Usually >30 days in advance...
 - ▶ I try to make appointments as close to the 30 day advance window as possible to nail down a time... sometimes they will tell to call back...

Step 2: Do your homework and be prepped

- ▶ Usually at most, you have 15 minutes (varies... 5 minutes... 1 hour)
- ▶ Good at the start of the conversation to find out how much time they really have
 - ▶ Expect to be presenting to an education/science/legislative assistant staffer
 - ▶ Likely little science/tech experiences - so no Jargon!!!!
- ▶ Who do they represent (what is their specific district)
 - ▶ Be prepared with a story that happens in their district
 - ▶ Know if they are on any of the relevant committees (i.e.
 - ▶ Education and the Workforce, Appropriations, Science, Space, and Tech, Small Business, and relevant Caucuses...i.e. the STEM Education one:
<http://stemedcaucus2.org/>)
- ▶ Connect as much as you can to their experience, interest, and needs of the district
 - ▶ i.e. for me in Massachusetts Rep. Jim McGovern huge interest in agriculture and education
 - ▶ Discuss work that is happening in Worcester and with Mass Bay Community College to grow middle skill talent pool.... (cities and college in his district)

Step 3: Plan presentation as group

- ▶ Generally, if a group of 3-5 have someone who is excited to:
 - ▶ Lead person: Describe the larger scale of the program and why it exists, nationwide impact, and its importance...
 - ▶ Generally STEM education is a fairly easy sell for most staff members.
 - ▶ But end with the importance of congressional support for such programs as they provide opportunities for many of their constituents that they probably otherwise would not have access to and that enhances the educational and economical vitality of the district that they represent
 - ▶ The ASK: Recognize the value and need for NSF STEM education funding... even in these times of tight funding... there is a lot bang for the buck...
- ▶ Plan on structure...
 - ▶ It is often nice to rotate if in a group as we all like to talk about our projects but that often leaves the last person with the least amount of time
 - ▶ So if someone is primarily focused in a particular district may be good to start with them.

Step 4: Be Flexible and have a leave-behind

- ▶ **Be ready to wait.... Particularly late in the day...**
 - ▶ Staffers are very busy and often very tired at the end of the day
 - ▶ So always thank them for their time
 - ▶ Be ready to reschedule for potentially later in the day
 - ▶ Be ready to present out in the hall or under stairways, etc...
 - ▶ Be prepared to tell your story in 1,2,5, or 10 minute chunks
- ▶ **Prepare a 1-2 page document or a media kit (leave behind)**
 - ▶ Impact on the district/state/nation
 - ▶ Easy to read... to the point... easy for a staffer to summarize... basically does it for them
 - ▶ Link to our media kit...
http://urbaneco.bc.edu/press/Press_kit_barnett.pdf
 - ▶ Link to our brochure... <http://urbaneco.bc.edu/press/handout.pdf>
 - ▶ Pictures and Stories!!!!!! ...Stories are remembered...

Step 5: Be succinct... leave behind...stories!!!

- ▶ Easy to talk a lot about your project...
 - ▶ Elevator speech... short, sweet, stories of impact
- ▶ Potential sketch....
 - ▶ Hello, my name is [] and I'm from [] (establishes relevancy) we work in the cities/towns/district (perhaps name a school or two).
 - ▶ I am here to talk to you about impact of [XXX] on the residents in the representative or Senator's district/state
 - ▶ This is important [story of impact on youth/teacher]
 - ▶ Something "cool" about your work...
 - ▶ Kids are building sensors to Robotics to.... Improves graduation, learning, programming... etc...
 - ▶ Hand the document you prepped to them at the end... otherwise they will focus on this and not listen to you....
 - ▶ Unless you have prepared you presentation where it follows the document...
 - ▶ Every staffer always takes notes.... So even then I usually hand the document at the end (the leave behind)
 - ▶ If an event is coming up... mention it as a potential invite to the member or someone from their staff... include in the leave-behind and follow-up later..

Step 6: Thank you and Invites

- ▶ Thank them for their time
 - ▶ If there is a poster session at the event the next day or something like that invite them
 - ▶ They likely can't make it but the invite is there
 - ▶ They will probably give you the cards of the relevant individuals but also get the card of the person you talked with
 - ▶ Get any contact information for the local district office...
 - ▶ Follow-up in the next day or two with a thank you note and an invite to an event that may be coming up for your project...

