



Best Practices for Meeting with a Member of Congress or their Senior Staff

Updated September 23, 2025

When lawmakers make difficult budget decisions, they must know which federal programs are making a key difference in their constituents' lives. A meeting with your member of Congress or their key staffers is one of the most valuable ways to educate them on the impact your program has in the communities they represent and the important role AmeriCorps funding plays in those results. By educating them about the impact, you can encourage your representatives to become champions of your programs and AmeriCorps.

A one-on-one meeting will carry more weight than signing a petition, sending a letter or email, or making a phone call (although those are helpful too), and there are many advantages to holding your meeting in the local office, rather than the DC office. Scheduling a meeting with the district/state office can be easier and allows you to establish a local relationship that can be deepened over time.

Below are some tips for requesting and leading a successful in-district meeting with your member of Congress or a senior member of their staff.

If you have any questions or need help at any stage in this process, contact Sarah Aldridge (sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org), Voices' Congressional Affairs Director. Please email Sarah when your meeting is scheduled!

1. **Selecting a date for your in-district congressional office meeting:** When requesting a meeting, try to contact the local office at least two weeks before your preferred meeting date. We recommend offering several days or a span of time when you would be available to meet.
 - a. If it is important that you meet with the lawmaker, ask for an appointment during a congressional recess or on a Monday or Friday, when the legislator is most likely to be home. (Visit [our webpage](#) for details on the congressional calendar).
 - b. If you cannot secure a meeting with the lawmaker, meeting with their District or State Director - both senior members of the congressional office staff – can still be extremely valuable. Developing a relationship with the District or State Director can really benefit your organization for the long term. (To learn more about the importance of the district staff – [check out this series of interviews with Brian McNabb, State Director for Senator Bill Cassidy](#)).
2. **Scheduling a one-on-one meeting with your local congressional office:** First, call the local office and ask who you should contact to schedule an in-district meeting with the lawmaker or their District/State Director. If you are having trouble reaching them, contact the Voices team and we can send you the scheduler's email address. Second, draft an email message that includes a general description of your organization, the purpose of the meeting, who will be in attendance (note any constituents), and dates of availability. See the template in the appendix of this guide. Be prepared to follow-up on your meeting request if you do not receive a response after a week or more.

3. **Once you've scheduled your meeting, let us know:** Voices for National Service wants to track all the great work happening across the country, and we want to make sure you feel confident and prepared for your meeting. Please email Sarah (sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org) once you've scheduled a meeting with your member of Congress or their staff. Sarah can answer questions and help you plan for the meeting.
4. **Decide who should attend the meeting to help demonstrate the breadth of support for AmeriCorps in your area:** District office meetings about AmeriCorps funding are strongest when the congressional office can see multiple community members, representing different organizations or perspectives, speaking about the impact AmeriCorps has locally. As you plan for your district office meeting, we recommend inviting another AmeriCorps program, a service partner, board member, AmeriCorps alumni, or other local validators from your area to participate in your meeting. If appropriate, ask your meeting participants to show clear co-branding with AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps Seniors – for example: they can wear AmeriCorps branded clothing or a lapel pin to the appointment, or use an AmeriCorps virtual background.
5. **Prepare for your meeting:** Review background information about your members of Congress and see if they have taken any positions on relevant issues. Download and review Voices for National Service's [talking points](#) to prepare for the meeting.
 - Congressional staff often refer to materials given to them in meetings. We recommend you create a folder with documents to share with the member or staff at the start of your meeting:
 - Information on your organization, including impact stats and stories.
 - National Service in Your State Report – *While these are unavailable on the AmeriCorps website, please email sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org to ask for your state's report.*
 - One-pager on the National Service Congressional Caucus ([found here](#)).
 - Relevant local news articles (including any Letters to the Editor or Op-Eds) that discuss the impact of AmeriCorps.
6. **Arrive early:** Many district offices are located in government buildings, where you must pass through security at the entrance. Give yourself enough travel time so you are not late for your meeting.
7. **Be prepared with a meeting agenda:** While the meeting structure may vary based on whether the member of Congress is present or how much time has been allotted for the meeting, we recommend that you try to follow this meeting flow –
 - Open by thanking the office for their time and by distributing meeting materials, including any leave-behind documents.
 - Introduce the group. Each participant should briefly share their relationship with AmeriCorps and how AmeriCorps is helping to solve pressing needs in the region.
 - Highlight the connection between AmeriCorps funding and the impact your program has in the lawmaker's community, i.e. "Because of AmeriCorps, we are able to...."
 - Use relevant data and statistics to show the benefits your program is providing the community.
 - Explain how you must match your AmeriCorps grant with funds from private and local sources, and how this public-private partnership returns \$17 in community benefits for every \$1 Congress appropriates to AmeriCorps.
 - Discuss appropriations and how AmeriCorps is needed to protect your work. Explain how cuts to federal funding for AmeriCorps could jeopardize the services the lawmaker's

constituents rely upon and destabilize your organization, i.e. “Without AmeriCorps, we would be unable to...”

- Close the meeting with three “asks”:
 - Ask the member of Congress to protect the federal investment in AmeriCorps.
 - Ask them to join the [National Service Congressional Caucus](#), if not already a member.
 - Invite the lawmaker and their staff to visit your AmeriCorps program for a site visit.
- At the end of the meeting, ask the staff or lawmaker to take a photo with you to share on social media, tagging the member and @Voices4Service.

8. **Communicating your message:** It is important to be disciplined, positive, and transparent. Stick to general themes and the [talking points](#) provided by Voices for National Service, adapting them to emphasize your organization’s work and points that resonate with your member of Congress. Highlighting the positive impacts of AmeriCorps on your organization will make clear why it is important they protect the investment in AmeriCorps and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of AmeriCorps. If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, it is okay to say, “I will follow up with that information, as soon as possible” – just be sure to follow up!
9. **Be respectful:** You can help build champions of national service by providing accurate and timely information, presenting persuasive arguments, and always remaining courteous and respectful during your meeting. Avoid being argumentative, even if the member of Congress and/or staffer disagree with your perspective; review our [Tips for Handling Tough Questions](#) document to prepare. Be patient and listen to what they have to say.
10. **Listen and gather information:** We recommend you do not invite the press or the general public, as members of Congress and staff are more inclined to speak freely and share information during private meetings. It is important to take detailed notes and flag any commitments that are made. Remember to ask members of Congress and their staff how you can help ensure their support.
11. **Follow Up:** After the meeting, thank the member of Congress and/or staffer for their time and get the staffer’s business card or email address. Most offices have staff business cards located at the front desk. Follow up with the staff on anything that was left unclear or unanswered. If you are unable to get the staffer’s business card, ask Sarah (sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org) for the correct contact information. Always send a follow-up email in which you should thank the member of Congress and/or staffer for taking the time to meet with you, summarize the meeting - including any specific asks that were made by you or commitments made by their office - answer any questions that were left unanswered, and link to any materials that were requested.

Appendix: Template – In-District Congressional Meeting Request

When lawmakers have to make difficult budget decisions, they want to know which federal programs make a difference in the lives of their constituents. A one-on-one meeting with your member of Congress or their senior staff is one of the most valuable ways you can explain the impact your program has in the communities they represent and the important role AmeriCorps funding plays in those results - more so than signing a petition, sending a letter, or making a phone call.

There are many advantages to holding your meeting in the district office, not Washington, DC:

- In DC, meetings are often cancelled or cut short by Capitol Hill business – committee hearings, floor votes, or conflicting events. Those same distractions do not exist in the local office, so the lawmaker or their staff usually has more time to meet with you.*
- You can bring a local service partner, board member, local funder or a service beneficiary to the meeting who can help validate the impact AmeriCorps has in your community.*

If you have any questions or need help at any stage in this process, contact Sarah Aldridge (sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org), Voices' Congressional Affairs Director. Please email Sarah when your meeting is scheduled!

The first step to setting up a meeting is to call the legislator's office and ask for the name and email address of the staff member responsible for scheduling local meetings. If you are having trouble contacting them, reach out to the Voices team and we can send you the scheduler's contact information. This template email should be customized and sent to the congressional scheduler or district director.

TEMPLATE EMAIL

Dear [SCHEDULER/DISTRICT DIRECTOR NAME],

I am writing on behalf of [ORGANIZATION NAME], located in [OFFICIAL'S DISTRICT/STATE] to request a meeting with [NAME OF SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] to discuss federal funding for AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a valuable resource that is helping local nonprofits address the needs of this community and we would like to share why it is critical, even in these difficult budgetary times. We hope to meet on [PROVIDE TIME FRAME OR SPECIFIC DATE OPTIONS] but are happy to work with you to accommodate [NAME OF SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE]'s schedule.

Our group will include:

- [Name, Title, Organization, City]
- [Name, Title, Organization, City]
- [Name, Title, Organization, City]

[Personalize here in 2-3 sentences, including the following information:

- Briefly introduce your organization, with a link to any public-facing website.

- Explain how AmeriCorps funding and AmeriCorps members help your organization deliver tangible impact in the state or congressional district.
- Highlight if/how your organization was impacted by recent grant terminations.

AmeriCorps grants – and the AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers they support – provide our community organizations with the people power that we need to solve local challenges, and unlike most federal grant programs, AmeriCorps grants are matched by funds from private, philanthropic, and local sources. Economists have found that this efficient public-private partnership yields more than \$17 in benefits for every \$1 invested by Congress.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is just one of many local nonprofits that is harnessing the power of AmeriCorps members to help address some of our region's most pressing social and economic challenges. Across [STATE], there are [#] AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers working hand in hand with local partners to respond to natural disasters, tutor students, combat hunger and homelessness, fight the opioid epidemic, help seniors live independently, support veterans and military families, and much more. Our community and your constituents rely on AmeriCorps service members for resources every day.

I look forward to meeting with [NAME OF LEGISLATOR] to share more about our work and the critical role AmeriCorps plays in our ability to serve your constituents. If they are unable to meet with us, we would like to meet with the District or State Director. I will contact you again in a few weeks to follow up on this request, or you can reach me directly at [PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL]. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

[NAME]

[TITLE, ORGANIZATION]

[PHONE NUMBER]