



TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICY ADVOCACY WORKSHOP SERIES

Building and Sustaining Relationships with Policymakers



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WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN THIS MODULE

asking for and
preparing for a meeting



champion identification
and development



considerations for meeting
with policymakers



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

asking for a meeting

preparing for a meeting

at the meeting

after the meeting



When requesting a meeting, include:

- * Your name and...
 - ▶ Where you live if you're a constituent—powerful!
 - ▶ Professional and/or group affiliation
- * The issue(s) you would like to discuss
- * The office you want to visit
- * Several dates/times you are available to meet

Don't hear anything after a few days? Follow up by phone!



THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF



U.S. Capitol Rotunda viewed from behind the statue of George Washington | Matt H. Wade

Meeting with staff instead of the elected official?

FABULOUS!

Be excited, be respectful, be convincing, and tell your story!

- * Legislative aides and other staffers you may meet with are trusted, reliable sources of information
- * Staff will usually give you more time than the legislator would be able to offer
- * Seize opportunities to maintain relationships with staff members

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Considerations for Planning and Preparation:

- * Do your homework and know your audience*
 - * Even if you disagree on most things, find one recent action to thank the legislator for when you meet
- * Create an agenda to stay focused on your mission
- * Plan to go with a group if you can (let the office know)
- * Prepare supplemental materials that support your proposal
- * Anticipate challenging questions
- * Determine: ***What's your "ask"?***

* for guidance on what might be important to pay attention to, see previous modules on gathering and effectively conveying evidence to a target audience

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS AND PREPARE RESPONSES

- * What are the **merits** of the issue?
- * What impact does it have **in their district**?
- * What does the **general public** understand and say about the issue?
 - * What do **constituents** say about the issue and proposed solution?
- * Does the issue have the commitment of a **special interest group**?
- * What is the issue's **impact** on the economy?
- * What does your proposed solution **cost**?
- * Does it involve possible **job losses/gains**?
- * Does the issue have **support** from the President or Governor?

Based on what you know about your target audience, what else can you expect to be asked and prepare to answer?



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Considerations for an Effective Meeting:

- * Be **concise** and **respectful** of everyone's time
- * **Tell your story** – use the framework of self, us, and now*
- * **Listen carefully and actively**, taking your clues from the people to whom you are listening
- * Uphold **honesty** and **transparency** to build **trust**
 - ▶ It's okay to not know something - in fact, this gives you a concrete reason to conduct follow-up outreach!
- * **Make your ask and convey why it matters to them!**
- * Offer to be a resource for them on the issue/solution
- * Leave something impactful behind
- * Thank them for their time and consideration!

** for guidance on using this framework, view the series module on storytelling and advocacy*

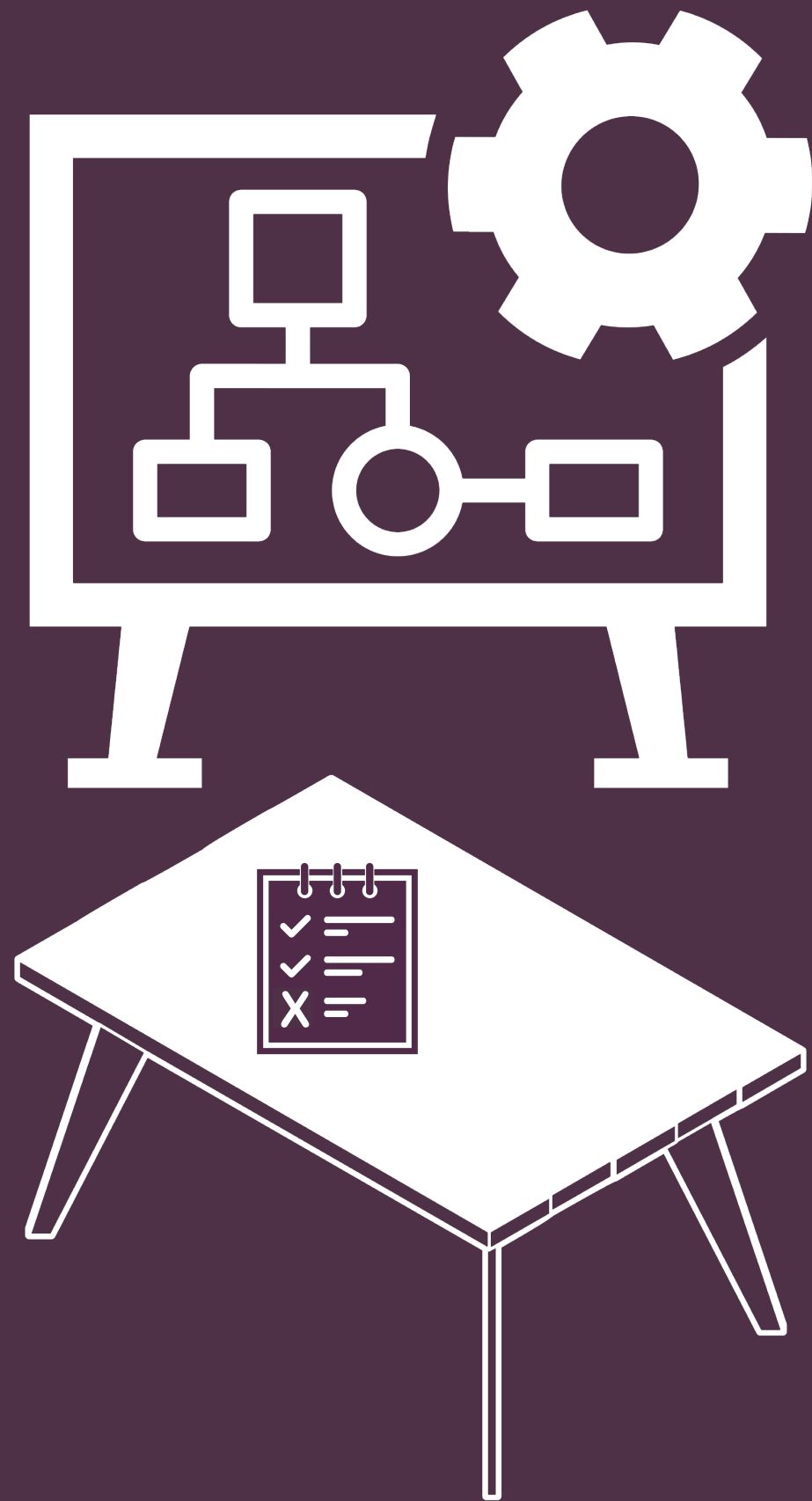
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

asking for a meeting

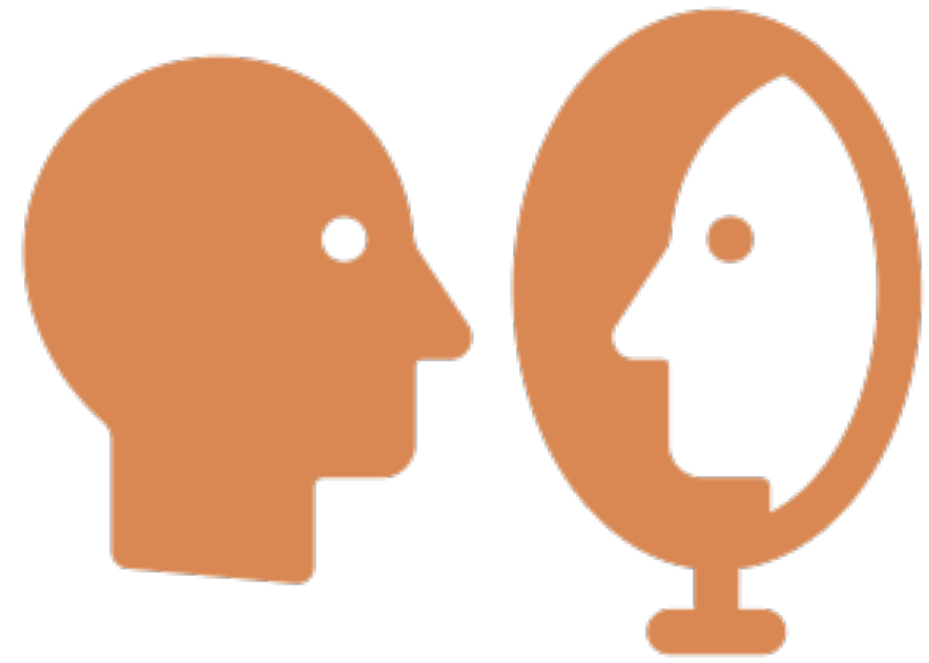
preparing for a meeting

at the meeting

after the meeting



- * Debrief with your team and yourself-
 - ▶ What went well? How can you do more of it?
 - ▶ What are key takeaways/lessons learned?
 - ▶ How will you make changes in your strategy?
- * Prepare follow-up materials and information
 - ▶ Retrieve responses to questions you did not know
 - ▶ Gather all follow-up information you promised
- * What can your group share with the larger advocacy effort?
- * Keep the lines of communication open
 - ▶ Set a calendar reminder to check in periodically
- * Send a thank you email to follow up - and reiterate your ask!



REFLECTION POINT:

What about your issue/solution do you think is most important to capture in a concise, digestible way to your target audience?

What has worked for you in the past to convey complex concepts to someone with no background/expertise in what you shared?

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS

Look to natural sources...

- Previously submitted/sponsored aligned legislation
- Sit on relevant committees
- Member of relevant caucuses
- Influential figure (among colleagues or in the public eye)

Additional Considerations:

- Specific needs illuminated in community/state
- Public personal background/history
- Map relationships
- Monitor social media





GAINING MOMENTUM WITH CHAMPIONS

Working with Champions can help generate the action needed to advance policy.

Reaching Valuable Networks

- * Unique awareness of what is “trending” and priorities among policymakers
- * Encouraging colleagues to join in action
- * Drafting or co-sponsoring legislation

Speaking Out

- * At events
- * To colleagues
- * In news media
- * On social media

Possible Venues/Events

- * Rallies
- * Town halls
- * Community engagements
- * Press releases
- * Dear Colleague letters
- * Briefings
- * Hearings

SUPPORTING CHAMPION DEVELOPMENT

When they do/say something aligned...

- Thank them for their time, energy, and passion
- Uplift their supportive efforts in your networks
- Provide special acknowledgement for extraordinary action

Ask how you can help!

- Legislators are the experts of their setting and will let you know how you can best support!



Make mutual connections

- They can connect you with others working in alignment you and your group can approach
- You can connect them with impacted stakeholders and constituents who want to tell their stories

Be reliable and responsive

- Communicate often!
- Answer office outreach thoughtfully and timely
- Respond to all requests to speak out about your issue

“If the time is not ripe,
we have to ripen the time.”

– *Dr. Dorothy I. Height*

Social Worker, Activist, Civil Rights & Women's Rights Pioneer

