



Organizing Legislative Visits in Your County: Basic Guidelines and Toolkit

Counties play an essential role in legislative and administrative state functions. Broadening and establishing a relationship with your local legislators is critical to advancing the needs and initiatives in your county. This publication serves as a guide to hosting and organizing a legislative visit with your legislators. Hosting a legislative visit allows county officials and staff to promote, advocate, and discuss the important issues facing county governments.

The goal is for county officials to successfully organize and host a legislative visit with key stakeholders in order to: 1) identify the issues that are important to the county and its citizens; 2) determine why these issues are important; and, 3) determine the main goals you hope to accomplish and certain action items following the meeting. By hosting county legislative visits, counties' can begin to identify, collaborate, and advance goals that will benefit both your individual county and all counties throughout the Commonwealth.

Getting Started

- **Choose** a point person to coordinate and organize the legislative visit.
- **Begin** planning one month in advance.
 - **Set** a date for the legislative visit. Plan accordingly when the state legislators are in their home districts. Session schedules can be found [here](#) to determine when your legislators are available.
 - **Weeks 1-2: Focus** on determining a date and time that works for both the county and the legislator(s). Consider the legislators' time and other commitments. Make sure that the visiting legislator(s) do not have time constraints/other commitments immediately preceding or following the meeting.

- **Weeks 3-4: Determine** discussion issues and goals. **Develop** the list of issues to discuss internally.
- **Choose** a moderator for the meeting.
- **Determine** the level of media coverage you would like present at the meeting.

Developing Issues and Preparing For Your Visit

Developing the topics and issues that will be discussed at the legislative visit is important to the overall success of the meeting. Determining a limited number of issue items will better streamline the meeting and allow your team to prioritize and localize topics specifically related to the county and shared constituents.

- **Coordinate** an internal meeting with certain county officials and staff to develop the issues that will be potentially discussed at the meeting. Require officials and staff invited to the legislative meeting to submit areas of concern and issues that they wish to discuss. Remove any duplicates and combine any areas when necessary.
 - **Determine** a maximum of six issues to discuss with the legislator(s). *Make your issues and message local – focusing on the local impact that these specific issues may be having in the legislative district and the county. Make sure they connect with the central purpose of your meeting.*
- **Create** a streamlined list of concerns. Once the six topics are established, invite key county personnel to participate in the meeting.
- **Circulate** determined issues to the commissioners for approval.
- **Develop** a fact sheet or briefing paper covering the issues that will be discussed at

the meeting. Invite matter experts to submit written descriptions for the meeting.

- **Check** with CCAP on the current status of legislation, talking points, fact sheets, or if you would like a CCAP government relations staff member present at the meeting.
- **Set** an agenda for the meeting, and **send** a copy of the finalized agenda with the meeting topics to the legislators prior to the meeting.

Delivering Your Message and Conducting the Meeting

Hosting the meeting is the most important part of the legislative meeting, and ensuring that the visit produces a productive use of time. Once your team has scheduled a date and time and determined the key issues that will be discussed at the legislative visit, how the meeting is moderated becomes a critical aspect.

The meeting should focus only on the issues that have been predetermined. It is essential to all involved to stick to the agenda; remain on task with the agenda; and keep messaging simple. The meeting should not be an open forum, but should always remain committed to the pre-established agenda.

- **Establish** the ground rules for the meeting including timeframe for each issue scheduled to be covered.
- **Utilize** the moderator to conduct the meeting and remain on-time and on-task.
- **Assign** each county personnel/subject matter expert to present a *brief* presentation on each issue (estimated 5-7 minutes).
 - **Presentations** should include: 1) the issues; 2) a brief background; 3) concerns related to the issue; and, 4) clear, succinct questions for the legislator(s).
 - **Provide** time for Q&A and summarize the discussion on the specific issue. Total estimated time per issue: 15 minutes.
- **Summarize** the issues and discussion prior to the conclusion of the meeting. This will

typically be the responsibility of the moderator.

Other Considerations and Best Practices

- **Provide** a summary of the meeting internally. The meeting summary should include necessary follow-up and next steps to accomplish any of the goals or address any issues discussed at the meeting.
- Meetings should be published and sunshined.
 - **Post** meeting in similar manner to weekly commissioners' meetings.
 - **Allow** communication department to engage in special outreach to local media outlets.
- **Consider** hosting the meeting either prior to 12 noon or immediately after 12 noon.
- **Consider** a tour of certain county facilities to highlight county administered programs and services.
- Meeting time should not exceed two hours.

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If your county is hosting a legislative visit and meeting, CCAP's Government Relations team is available to assist you in your outreach efforts. Please contact Lisa Schaefer at lschaefer@pacounties.org or Melissa Anese at manese@pacounties.org.