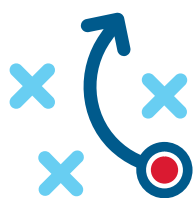


Policymakers are connecting more with their communities by utilizing telephone, virtual and video conferencing platforms. Virtual meetings are not that different than in-person meetings. In fact, many of the same rules apply for virtual meetings as they do for face-to-face meetings. You should know your audience, be clear about the “ask”, share a personal story or example, and bring/send supporting materials.

Here are a few additional tips to stay connected, share your story and inform elected officials of your priorities during virtual meetings:



MEETING SCHEDULING AND COORDINATION: Some offices prefer video conferences and some offices prefer phone conferences. Plan on being flexible and accommodate their preferences, meeting dates and times. If you opt for a virtual platform (Zoom, Teams, Slack, etc.), let the office know what you will use and be sure to send links or phone numbers to your meeting in advance.



HAVE A PRE-MEETING STRATEGY: Share an agenda, participant list and pre-reading materials before your meeting. It is helpful to send a one-pager ahead of the meeting so that staff can familiarize themselves with your issues and position. Discuss logging into the meeting at least 5 mins early.



TEST THE TECHNOLOGY: Make sure your technology/internet works. Ideally you should test your platform before the meeting to work out the glitches beforehand. Make sure to use a good microphone, raise your webcam to eye level for the best angle and don't forget to turn your microphone off when you're not speaking.



DESIGNATE ROLES FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS: It's very easy to speak over others on a virtual call, so make sure you prepare for discussion, assign roles and establish transition cues. Assign a host/facilitator, who will make specific asks, who will handle questions and troubleshoot technical issues etc.



LIMIT PARTICIPANTS: Be mindful of how many people you're including on your virtual call. More participants can lead to less conversation and lags in audio when using your video. Recommend that you limit the group size to about ten or fewer participants so you can easily see each other, know who's talking and see the visual cues of when it is, or isn't, your turn to talk.



FOCUS ON THE MEETING: Avoid multitasking during your meeting. Turn off notifications and try to limit background interruptions. Focus 100% on what the legislator or staffer is saying.



HOLD SHORTER, MORE FOCUSED MEETINGS: Do not expect to have an hour. Choose 1 or 2 issues to discuss and make sure they are relevant and timely.



REMEMBER TO FOLLOW UP: After the meeting, send a thank you note to the policymakers and/or their staff members for their time. Include your contact information and any follow up resources that cover the topics you discussed. Always offer to be a resource.