

Crafting Your Message and Ask for Policymakers

WHEN MEETING WITH POLICYMAKERS...

It is up to you to be persuasive in support of your request or “ask.” That means explicitly showing the policymakers how supporting your ask benefits their and their constituents’ interests and fits with their values. The following tips and worksheet will help you craft effective messages and a clear “ask.”



Understand the ask and the message

ASK: What you are asking the policymaker to do.

MESSAGE: How the ask helps the policymaker and their constituents.

Choose your ask

- Your ask should be:
 - **SPECIFIC:** clear enough that the policymaker knows exactly how to complete your ask.
 - **ACTIONABLE:** timely and something they can act on now.
 - **ACHIEVABLE:** something that the policymaker has the power to do.
- Types of asks can include creating, supporting, or opposing a specific policy; supporting specific funding or appropriations levels; joining a caucus; or contacting you with questions on an issue.

Incorporate your answers from the Researching Policymakers worksheet

- What are your legislator’s priorities and interests?
- What are some possible shared interests and priorities that will allow you to show how acting on the issue you care about helps them to accomplish their goals and fits with their values?

Use plain, easy to understand language

- Audiences do not respond well to jargon or acronyms and using these terms may make them disengage.
- Here is a [list](#) of common words used in Earth and space sciences with more than one common meaning—keep these in mind when crafting your message.

If possible, incorporate a personal story into your message

- How does your work or the work of other scientists benefit the state or district?
- Benefits of storytelling:
 - Storytelling focuses people’s attention and improves memory.
 - Science has shown that brains mirror each other during storytelling—creating a connection.
 - Sharing a personal story increases trust important to building relationships.
- Storytelling resources:
 - [What Are the Pieces of the Story?](#)
 - [Science Communication Essentials for Successful Storytelling Webinar](#)

Prepare for controversial topics

- Remember: People are not blank slates—they listen from the perspective of their own experiences.
- Anticipate what topics might be contentious and prepare transition statements that bridge back to your main points.
- Avoid making negative comments about other researchers or their work or about the policymakers or their constituents.

Worksheet: Crafting Your Message and Ask

1. The issue I want to discuss impacts the policymaker and their constituents in what ways?
(Describe in 3 sentences or less):

2. The interests and priorities that the policymaker shares with me and that help show how acting on my issue helps them accomplish their own goals are: (from the Researching Policymakers worksheet):

3. One good analogy or use of social math that explains the impact, scope, or importance of this issue is:

4. Sum it up: What is my issue, why does it matter to the community, and what am I asking? (Describe in 5 sentences or less without using jargon):

5. As a result of this meeting, I want the policymaker to (my ask):

6. Three reasons this ask is appropriate for this policymaker are:

7. Is my ask specific? Actionable? Achievable? If not, how can I change it?

8. Are there any reasons the policymaker will not be receptive to my ask? Are there ways to change my request to make it something achievable for them?
