

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A DECISION-MAKER MEETING

## Part I: Get to know your decision-makers and introduce yourself

**Elected officials are in public office to serve their communities. The creative community has a responsibility to hold elected officials to account and make sure that public policy decisions will positively impact the creative sector. One way to do this is to introduce yourself and find time to meet with your elected decision-makers.**

### STEP 1: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE?

Do you know who your federal, state, and local elected decision-makers are? If the answer is no, use the QR code to visit MASSCreative's directory and identify who represents you at the State House and in Congress.



To find a list of your city or town officials, visit your municipality's website.

### STEP 2: FIND THEM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Find out which social media platforms your elected officials use and if they have websites. Here are some things to look for:

- Their office's contact information
- Are they working on or supporting arts and culture policies? Have they won earmarks for cultural organizations and community centers? If they are a state representative or state senator, are they co-sponsoring the Creative Sector Legislative Agenda?
- Do they schedule regular office or coffee hours?

### STEP 3: REACH OUT AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF

If your elected official schedules office or coffee hours, sign up or drop in. If they don't schedule either, send an email or call their office to introduce yourself.

If you want to meet with a state representative or state senator, you can find their official contact information using the QR code. Include these things in your message:



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### STEP 3: REACH OUT AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF (CONT'D)

- Name, address, contact information, and succinctly identify the issue that you want to discuss.
- Address the elected official by their title. For example, refer to them as “Representative Doe” or “Councilor Doe.”
- If you know their staff person, you can include and address them in the email or phone call. Remember that staff perform a lot of behind-the-scenes administrative work, so it’s helpful to also get to know them!

### STEP 4: CLEARLY STATE THE ISSUE AND SHARE YOUR “WHY”

Clearly explain the issue you care about and why. Briefly include data or references, but save most of your storytelling for the meeting. If possible, keep your introduction email to one or two paragraphs and keep your phone call to two minutes or less.

Do your research beforehand. If your state representative is already co-sponsoring a bill in the Creative Sector Legislative Agenda that you plan to advocate for, thank them. If not, ask them to consider co-sponsoring the bill and have the bill numbers handy. Save yourself the time and try to investigate their position on an issue so you know exactly what to ask from them.

Above all else, include why it’s personal. Elected officials need to hear from their constituents about the issues affecting them, not just statistics. How has an issue affected your business, housing, education, etc.? Remember to bring it back to the things that are personal and local.

### STEP 5: ASK FOR A MEETING

If you are not meeting your elected official at an office or coffee hour, ask for a meeting or invite them to a cultural event.

#### QR CODE LINK:

Look up your elected official: <https://www.mass-creative.org/learn/electedlookup>



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A DECISION-MAKER MEETING

## Part II: Prepare for the meeting

### STEP 1: SET YOUR GOAL FOR THE MEETING

What is your goal for this meeting? Ask yourself a few questions to determine what you want to get out of this time where you have your elected official's attention. The clearer you are with your goal for the conversation, the better you can prepare.

- Do you want your lawmaker to understand your work or your organization's impact better?
- Is there a specific piece of legislation or budget request that you want them to consider?
- Is there a pressing local issue that they can help you with?

### STEP 2: CREATE AN INTRO

Write down 3 - 4 sentences that explain your work or your organization's community impact. Take some time to practice your elevator pitch and test it on your colleagues and friends.

### STEP 3: KNOW YOUR ISSUE, KNOW YOUR LAWMAKER

If there is a specific bill that you want to discuss, make sure you know what it will do, how it will change things for the constituents your official represents, and include supporting data to strengthen your case. Have data points and stories of impact ready to tell a compelling story - but don't forget to make it personal.

Do some research on the official's position on the issue you care about, as well as their voting or action record. Know if they're already co-sponsoring or showing public support for the bill or solution you're meeting about.

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## Part II: Prepare for the meeting

### STEP 4: SET YOUR GOAL FOR THE MEETING

Elected officials must be held accountable to their constituents and there are many difficult challenges that they are required to work on. Get their attention on your issue by not only sharing a problem, but proposing a solution.

Keep their attention by offering to be helpful. Is the elected official working on a separate issue that you care about? Consider offering to help them raise awareness about issues that are of mutual interest. Use your businesses or social media to help them get the word out.

### STEP 5: BE MINDFUL ABOUT THE FLOW

Elected officials and their staff's schedules can quickly change to respond to crises or when votes are scheduled. Be prepared for a brief meeting and be mindful that you might have to wait or finish the meeting early.

- Start by introducing yourself or your organization and the reason that you are meeting.
- You should be ready to succinctly share stories and data before making your ask. Example: "One of the reasons I'm here today is to ask for your support on H.3587/S.2334, the Creative Space Act. This bill directly addresses the challenges we are facing in our district."
- Listen to them. They will have their own reasons for supporting or opposing an issue. Part of doing your research is understanding their perspective.
- Be prepared to answer their questions about support, opposition, data, and impact on constituents. If you don't have an answer to any of their questions, offer to do additional research and follow up with their staff.

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### STEP 6: WRAP UP AND FOLLOW UP

At the end of the meeting, offer to be a resource and community partner. You have important knowledge about cultural policy issues that your elected official needs to stay informed - they might contact you later on to help them better understand what the creative community in their district needs.

Thank them for their time and consideration of your request.

Follow up with an email thanking the elected official for the meeting and reiterate your ask. You can always include attachments of materials you shared or items that you discussed.

### A WORD FOR THE STAFF:

Elected officials are not doing their work alone. Their staff are often responsible for managing their offices, priorities, and constituent work. They are trusted advisors to elected officials about the issues their office will take on.

If you are offered a meeting with staff, rather than the elected official themselves, take it. Staff can be among your greatest allies in an advocacy campaign. Make sure to thank staff for their work and respect them as professionals.