

Setting up appointments in Washington, D.C.

Think broadly about the purpose of your appointments. The meetings you will set up for the week you are in Washington, D.C. provide opportunity to meet with decision-makers one-on-one (or in small groups), and to

- 1) Begin to learn the policy landscape relevant to your work,
- 2) Share your science and knowledge with decision-makers who can apply it to their work,
- 3) Become familiar with the culture, process, and day-to-day experience of policy makers, and
- 4) Apply all that you have learned about communicating your science effectively.

One of the biggest challenges in connecting science to the policy world is in figuring out when and where (and to whom) to do so. Take advantage of your week in Washington, D.C. to begin to learn the “lay of the land” in the policy communities relevant to your field so that you are better prepared to judge if, when and how to “jump into the fray” in the future. Make sure that you don’t stop after sharing what you know, but that you are also asking for insight into how and when your expertise might be of use in the broader policy and management community. One simple strategy is to wait until the meeting is winding down, then ask “who else should I be talking to about this?”

Know the playing field. Find out what policy developments are related to your research. You are more likely to be helpful if you can connect your research to a relevant issue currently being considered. In Congress this will usually take the form of oversight hearings or legislation. In the U.S. federal agencies this can include “rule making” or budget formulation. At the World Bank, IUCN, or U.N. agencies this could take the form of planning for new initiatives, or evaluating ongoing efforts. You can begin to inform yourself by looking at federal websites (see below for some of these) as well as NGO websites and policy news sites. Some of the news, blogs, and discussion streams that you may find helpful include: *E&ENews*, *Scienceblogs*, *MIT Environmental Journalism Tracker*, *DotEarth (NY Times)*, Society of Environmental Journalists website, *Yale Environment360*, *CQPolitics*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, and *Politico*.

Make use of your professional affiliations. An increasing number of scientific and professional societies have dedicated government affairs staff. Even if all they can offer you is thoughts on committees and agencies of jurisdiction it may save you a lot of time. In some cases they may be willing to share staffers’ names or contact information and help arrange an appointment.

- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (<http://www.aaas.org>)
See AAAS’s list of contacts for other societies: <http://www.aaas.org/spp/cstc/www/resorgs.htm>
- Ecological Society of America (ESA) (<http://www.esa.org>)
- American Geophysical Union (AGU) (<http://www.agu.org>)
- American Geographical Society (AGS) (<http://www.amergeog.org>)
- American Economic Association (AEA) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA>, <http://www.aeaweb.org>)

US Fellows: Take stock of your institutional support. Contact your University’s government relations or government affairs office. Many fellows have found the staff very helpful and willing to set up appointments. In some cases, your university may not want you to make your own appointments. Other offices are small and focused and do not have the staff time or expertise to help you to set up appointments. So do check in with them! Also, don’t forget about your colleagues! Some of them may have interacted with (or even testified for) policy makers at the federal level, and they may have some helpful guidance.

Team up? Consider working together if there are one or two other fellows who are targeting the same office and topic. However, if you are considering a group meeting, keep in mind the dynamics of group meetings and the length of time you’ll have for each appointment, and keep these group meetings small (two or three fellows is often a good size).

Think about organizations to meet. Consider meeting with members of Congress, their staff, U.S. agency officials, NGOs, and international organizations. If you already know where you want to plug into the policy world then use this opportunity to begin building your network. If you are still unsure where to start then consider approaching a few different types of organizations (eg, a meeting on the Hill, one in an agency, and one with an NGO) and focus on learning how these different entities work together and how they use information. You may come away with fewer solid contacts but a clear picture of where you need to focus your next opportunity.

Q&A:**How much detail do I need to give when I set up the appointment?**

Aside from name, affiliation and contact information you need to provide an idea of the topic of conversation. The more specific you can be the better. If you can connect the topic to the work of the person with whom you want to meet you are more likely to get the meeting. If you don't know of such connections be sure to provide a clear picture of the topic and why you want to meet, so they can judge whether the meeting makes sense – you don't want to waste your time or theirs. Meetings will vary in length. In Congress they'll generally be 15-30 min. In the agencies typically 30-60 min. Most will go quickly to get right to the point, and don't dawdle if the meeting seems to wrap up early.

Is it ok to get an appointment with a staffer?

If you're aiming for the "top of the food chain" you may find yourself meeting with one of their staff instead. Keep in mind that staff are often the specialists who have the background and training to understand how your work might fit into the bigger picture for the office. Meeting with a staffer can be incredibly valuable – they can often give you more time and a better picture of who the active players are on your issue.

What should I bring to a meeting?

Wear your suit and bring your business card to every meeting. Be prepared with a one-pager (or similar summary document), and have more detailed documents ready to provide *if it comes up*. Most of the folks you are likely to meet with, particularly in Congress, have piles of materials dropped off every day that they don't ever look at, so only provide more if it seems really relevant or if they ask for it.

Connecting with the U.S. Congress: Setting up meetings

The U.S. Congress is a large, and often daunting, institution. There are more than 500 members of the House and Senate (collectively known as members of Congress, or just “members”), with well over 10,000 staff. Meeting with a member or their staff is a great way to connect your work to policy – but where and how do you start?

Whom do I meet?

Determining who is most appropriate to meet can be one of the biggest challenges of setting up a meeting on Capitol Hill. There are primarily two types of offices in Congress: members’ offices (also known as personal offices); and committee offices. (see listing on following page.) A personal office gives more ready access to a member of Congress or his/her direct advisors, so if a particular member is a champion of an issue you can inform you are likely to get a meeting, possibly with the member. Committee offices are clearinghouses for legislation – every bill that becomes law must pass through a committee. Committee staff are much more specialized (and generally more senior), and are the people who design hearing and invite witnesses. It’s not uncommon for a meeting with committee staff to result in an invitation to testify at a related hearing.

A first step in setting up a meeting is to determine whom you want to meet. Your own Representative or Senator is an easy start – being a constituent gives you a big advantage! Look for members who are actively involved in issues related to your work. Two places to start are committees (ie, look at the members of the committee with jurisdiction over your issue) and caucuses. When members can’t serve on a committee of interest to them they will often form or join a related caucus. A list of caucuses can be found here:

<http://bit.ly/CongressionalCaucuses>. Your professional society may have government relations staff who can answer a simple question of “who works on my issue, and what committee has jurisdiction”. See <http://www.aaas.org/spp/cstc/wwc/resorgs.htm> for a partial list.

Members’ (and committees’) websites also delineate interests (and jurisdiction). Scanning their press releases and sponsored legislation can give you a sense of what their interests (and positions) are. To track legislation, or find legislation that a member has sponsored, go to www.thomas.gov.

How do I get contact information? And how do I set up the meeting?

Once you’ve determined which office to meet there are straightforward ways to find contact information and identify the person you need to speak to -- ask. Find their webpage (start with www.house.gov or www.senate.gov -- or a simple web search) and look for contact information. Or call the Capitol Switchboard at 1-202-224-3121 and ask for the office (such as “Senator Nelson’s office”, or “House Committee on Natural Resources”). When you get through (by phone or email), explain that you want to set up a meeting and ask how to do so. If you are targeting staff, simply ask who covers your issue. If you’ve called a committee, you may need to ask which subcommittee you should speak to first. When you get a name, ask for the spelling. Most offices have a formal procedure to request meetings (particularly for members) that involves a letter, fax, or email. If you’ll be meeting with a staffer (such as an LA or committee staff), ask to speak with him or her. Explain that you’ll be in town and would like to meet to discuss your work. They may be able to make the appointment on the spot, or may ask you to follow the office protocol. Follow up a week later if you’ve not heard anything.

Email@Congress

Congressional addresses follow simple rules (but watch the dots and underlines!)

In the House,
first.last@mail.house.gov
In the Senate,
[first_last@\[office\].senate.gov](mailto:first_last@[office].senate.gov)
where “[office]” is the committee or Senator they work for.

What do I bring?

Dress appropriately – start with a business formal suit. Always bring a business card, and preferably a “one-pager” briefing document that lays out your issue (and “ask”) in simple language. Bring other supporting materials to provide *if it seems appropriate*. But keep in mind most members and staff get so many documents each day that they don’t have time to read them, so keep it to a minimum (less is more).

What should I expect?

Be prepared for your meeting to only last five minutes. A good rule of thumb is to expect 5 minutes, hope for 15 minutes, and dream of 30 minutes. This way if your meeting gets cut short you’ve already conveyed your key message (in the first 5 minutes) and if it goes long it’s because you’ve been genuinely helpful and are engaged in constructive dialogue. Don’t be surprised if your meeting is changed to someone else, or if it starts with one

person who is called away and you have to start over. Schedules on the Hill are very fluid and shift by the minute. The more calmly and smoothly you can deal with disruptions the more productive you will be able to be. And be grateful if you have a long, quiet, uninterrupted meeting!

Expect the member or staff to have many distractions (phones, email, blackberries, others entering the room and interrupting), so stay focused and don't get flustered. You may be asked to do a "walk and talk" where you have your "meeting" in the hallway while walking with the member to another meeting or to the floor. This is not an insult, but is a sign that the meeting is important enough to them that they want to hear from you despite the fact that their schedule has been disrupted.

Remember that the member or staff has had meetings before yours, and will have meetings after yours – in most cases immediately before and after. They are dealing with a lot of different issues, so if you keep your message short and clear it is more likely to stick in their thoughts through tomorrow.

What about follow-up?

Take notes during or immediately after the meeting, especially of anything you promised as follow up. If you can complete all the follow up in a day or two, do so. If not, send a thank you email as soon as you can (the next day, preferably), outlining what you promised for follow up and when they can expect it.

Whenever anything else comes up that you think they would be interested in (a few weeks or months later), send it along, and use it as a way to maintain and build a relationship.

Senate committees:

- Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry (<http://agriculture.senate.gov>)
 - Nutrition and Food Assistance, Sustainable and Organic Agriculture, and General Legislation
 - Energy, Science and Technology
 - Domestic and Foreign Marketing, Inspection, and Plant and Animal Health
 - Production, Income Protection and Price Support
 - Rural Revitalization, Conservation, Forestry and Credit Jurisdiction
- Commerce, Science and Transportation (<http://commerce.senate.gov>)
 - Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard
 - Science and Space
- Energy and Natural Resources (<http://energy.senate.gov>)
 - Energy
 - National Parks
 - Public Lands and Forests
 - Water and Power
- Environment and Public Works (<http://epw.senate.gov>)
 - Clean Air and Nuclear Safety
 - Green Jobs and the New Economy
 - Oversight
 - Superfund, Toxics and Environmental Health
 - Water and Wildlife

House committees

- Agriculture (<http://agriculture.house.gov>)
 - Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research
 - Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Energy and Commerce (<http://energycommerce.house.gov>)
 - Energy and Environment
- Natural Resources (<http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>)
 - Energy and Mineral Resources
 - Insular Affairs, Oceans, and Wildlife
 - National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
- Science and Technology (<http://science.house.gov>)
 - Energy and Environment
 - Research and Science Education
- Transportation and Infrastructure (<http://transportation.house.gov>)
 - Water Resources and Environment

International Organizations

1. World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org>)
2. International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org>)
3. UN Environmental Program (UNEP) (<http://www.unep.org>)
4. European Commission- Fisheries (<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index.htm>)
5. UN FAO Fisheries Department (<http://www.fao.org/fishery>)

NGOS

Resources for the Future (RFF) (<http://www.rff.org>)
Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) (<http://www.ucs.org>)
World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (<http://www.worldwildlife.org>)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC) (<http://www.nature.org>)
Conservation International (CI) (<http://www.conservation.org>)
Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) (<http://www.environmentaldefense.org>)

Oceans:

Listing of Organizations: <http://www.oceanconserve.org/links/Organizations>, <http://www.onefish.org>
Pew Institute for Ocean Science (<http://www.pewoceanscience.org>)
Consortium for Ocean Leadership (<http://oceanleadership.org/home>)
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (<http://www.nmsfocean.org>)
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) (<http://ioc-unesco.org>)
SeaWeb (<http://www.seaweb.org/home.php>)

Partnerships

- **U.S. Climate Action Partnership (USCAP)** is a group of businesses and environmental organizations calling on the federal government to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. <http://www.uscap.org>
- **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** is a global environmental network with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations that brings governments, non-government organizations, UN agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws, and best practice.

U.S. Departments and Agencies:

1. Department of Commerce (DOC) (<http://www.commerce.gov>)
 - a. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) (<http://www.noaa.gov>)
 - i. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>)
 - ii. National Weather Service (<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>)
 - iii. U.S. Climate Change Science Program (<http://www.climatescience.gov>)
 - iv. Sea Grant (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov>)
 - v. Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) (http://www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/programs/coast_div.html)
 - b. Economics and Statistics Administration (<http://www.esa.doc.gov>)
 - c. Bureau of Economic Analysis (<http://www.bea.gov>)
2. Department of the Interior (DOI) (<http://www.doi.gov>)
 - a. Bureau of Reclamation (<http://www.usbr.gov>)
 - b. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) (<http://www.usgs.gov>)
 - c. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) (<http://www.fws.gov>)
 - d. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (<http://www.blm.gov/nhp/index.htm>)
 - e. National Park Service (NPS) (<http://www.nps.gov>)
3. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (<http://www.usda.gov>)
 - a. Agricultural Research Service (ARS) (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/main.htm>)
 - b. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov>)
 - c. Economic Research Service (ERS) (<http://www.ers.usda.gov>)
 - d. Forest Service (<http://www.fs.fed.us>)
4. Department of Energy (DOE) (<http://www.energy.gov>)
5. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (<http://www.epa.gov>)
6. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/>)