

Leopold Leadership Program – September, 2009

Policy Module: Mock Hearings

Each hearing will be about an hour. The Committee will be opened by the Chair who may make opening remarks. The Committee will hear the prepared testimony of all witnesses, after which the Members will ask questions. Each witness will testify for no longer than five (5) minutes. The Chair is likely to stop your testimony promptly after (5) five minutes. After all witnesses have testified, the Committee will ask questions of the group for twenty (20) minutes. After the Q&A session, everyone will get 5 minutes to note comments. All of the testimony will be video recorded. In the afternoon, the experts and your colleagues will give feedback about the testimony content and presentation.

Remember that the Chair and other Members “control” the time in a hearing. They “grant” time to witnesses to answer questions, Committee members are each given equal but limited time to ask questions (and get their answers). If you ramble you may use up time that would otherwise allow follow-up questions, or questions for other witnesses. Members generally direct their questions to a specific witness on the panel. In some cases they will ask each witness to respond in turn to a question. If there is a compelling reason to refer back to a question directed at another witness, or to refer a question directed at you to another witness, ask the Committee to indulge you (but don’t push).

Roles and Responsibilities: Before arriving in DC each hearing group:

Reviews the resources provided in the final afternoon of the [June workshop](#) and on the [website](#) to:

- enumerate and prioritize the perspectives and key issues you collectively can address
- decide what constituency groups or stakeholders are impacted by this legislation
- determine the best way to present the arguments that you want to make through the individual testimonies, coordinating amongst the group to strengthen key messages.

Coaches:

Coaches will provide guidance, perspective and coordination for their panel. As a coach, you will talk with a trainer (and in some cases with staffers) to understand their goals and anticipated outcomes and obstacles. As your group wrestles with the topic, you will guide them through group or one-on-one discussions to develop and clarify their tasks and messages for testimony. In this process you may seek additional help from the trainers and staffers. You will be co-facilitating the group so that you and the other coach have one another to collaborate and dialogue about the hearing and the group process.

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the web resources and consult with the trainers and staffers to understand the big picture of the hearing topic, including the policy context, and lead the group to

- develop effective individual statements,
- coordinate statements to the extent possible for a “big picture” message, and
- anticipate and address questions from the committee
- develop questions that can be used by Committee Members (at Sept. training)

In addition you will also:

- make an appointment with Chad English after you both have reviewed the resources provided.
- initiate and organize the group meetings to meet the deadlines and keep the group on task.
- remind the group of the resources provided to you on the topic.
- apply, as appropriate, the tools you learned from the [leadership module](#).
(Assign roles: recorder, timekeeper; Subgrouping or pairing with reporting back; Brainstorming; Parking lot; Thinking styles; Gearbox; Team triangle, Plus/minus/interesting grids)

Coaches will receive feedback from experts and the hearing group on their leadership and facilitation of the group task.

Witnesses:

Once you have discussed the perspectives, the key issues, and the stakeholders with your coaches and others, you will write up a draft of your testimony, in consultation with your coaches. You will have time to work on your testimony with your team during the Saturday session but you will be expected to arrive with a written draft that you have rehearsed. Remember – the Committee is facing a choice and is looking to you for advice on how to make the best decision. Here are some guidelines to think about as you develop your testimony..

Content:

- *Relevant* – connect to what the Committee is (or could be) doing.
- *Recommendation* – the clearer your “ask” (or advice) the more helpful your testimony will be to policy makers.
- *Concrete* – use real-world examples and vivid imagery. Personal narratives are great!
- *Context* – connect your comments to legislation and oversight activities of Congress, current events, and Members’ districts and issues.
- *Uncertainty* – don’t avoid or ignore uncertainty, but start from what you DO know.
- *Succinct* – minimize the number of points you cover (three is a good upper limit). One “big idea” will be more compelling than a laundry list.

Form:

- *Format* – five minutes is quick. Use a simple, familiar structure (intro, state your position/ask, background and more detail, restate position and thanks).
- *Focus* – choose one; you can dive into the particulars of the science, or present a sense of consensus, but trying to do both is very difficult in five minutes.
- *Visuals* – use them sparingly, and keep them simple (for these mock hearings PowerPoint is not supported).
- *Language* – no jargon! Keep your language simple and direct
- *Short* – better to come in under your five minutes than to run over.

"The key is that the testimony needs to be directed toward some decision that Congress needs to make. It should provide information that is relevant to that decision. So, to the extent the testimony talks about a bill, it should clearly address the provisions of that bill -- whether a section should be supported, or deleted, or changed, and how the science informs that decision. The main question that Congress asks witnesses is: "So, what do you want us to do about it?"

–Michael Rodemeyer

Concentrate on knowing what the bills are all about; your homework is to connect the dots between what you know (the science) and the decisions being made. Witnesses can take the tack that various provisions are or are not consistent with our current scientific understanding and should be able to explain why.

–Jane Lubchenco