Building the Case for Public Statistics
Workshop: Creating An Effective Communications Strategy

2018 APDU Annual Meeting
Creating An Effective Communications Strategy

Overall Purpose and Goals of Session

- Review key messages from morning sessions.
- Explore further strategies and tips for engaging policymakers successfully!
- Apply strategies by developing “test” messages to educate policymakers about the needs and contributions of federal statistical agencies.
- Share messages, get feedback.
- Increase confidence and ability to effectively engage policymakers on issues important to federal data users.
Recap Key Messages: Advice from Dale and Emily

• **Engage** at the **right** time
  • Understand the legislative process to avoid unexpected pitfalls and increase chances of success!

• **Make “ask” achievable**
  • Request should be reasonable, coherent, concise, and, whenever possible, relevant to a policymaker’s committee assignment, seniority, district, and priorities.
Recap Key Messages: Advice from Dale and Emily

- Anyone can educate policymakers.

- Numbers matter—grassroots engagement important if campaign is particularly ambitious.

- Define message recipients—champions, targets, opponents.

- Develop flexible, creative, relevant, and practical tactics. Be realistic about costs and effort.

- Engage policymakers via variety of forums (social media, meetings, press, letters, etc…).
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**Why contact policymakers?**

- Inform them about an agency, program, or survey.
- Seek increased funding.
- Address a policy issue.
- Resolve problem affecting constituents.
- Demonstrate how data can inform policies.
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“No, I’m afraid we can’t ‘just make the data up’ —this is business, not politics...”
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Key to Successful One-on-One Meetings with Policymakers

▪ **BEFORE** the meeting:
  ▪ Identify appropriate staff contact to request meeting.
  ▪ Get to know your target! Read bio to understand member’s background, legislative priorities, and committee assignments.
  ▪ Reconfirm appointment and provide staff with appropriate background materials.
  ▪ Tweet positive note to office expressing enthusiasm about meeting.
  ▪ Designate a group leader to initiate and conclude meeting.

▪ **DURING** the meeting:
  ▪ Thank office for meeting and (if applicable) for supporting organization’s interests.
  ▪ Relate comments to member’s interests, district or state, and committee assignments.
  ▪ Assume policymaker is not familiar with agency, program, or survey you are discussing.
Key to Successful One-on-One Meetings with Policymakers

**DURING the meeting:**
- Provide specific, preferably applied, examples of how the agency’s data or programs are being used to meet the needs of constituents and/or improve the quality of life in the district or state.
- Be flexible—may meet with a different staff person or at a different location.
- Complete meeting within allotted time (usually 15 to 20 minutes).
- Have one-page fact sheets or other brief materials to leave behind summarizing the issue and the requested action. Letters from constituents, article from the media, other background materials can also be left if they help build the case.
- Stay positive and away from politics—especially current campaign politics!

**AFTER the meeting:**
- Email a thank you note to staff person, summarizing outcome of meeting and providing contact information for anyone who attended.
- Provide any requested follow up materials with thank you note.
- Tweet at office a follow up note thanking the policymaker for the meeting and thank them if they agreed to support your position.
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During the meeting: Typical Meeting Flow

- Team leader asks everyone to introduce themselves (name and institution). Be brief and avoid trap of engaging in too much small talk.

- Team leader describes what the group’s affiliation.
“The Population Association of America and Association of Population Centers are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 behavioral and social scientists and over 40 federally funded population research centers nationwide. Population scientists include demographers, economists, and sociologists who conduct research on population trends and the individual, societal, and environmental implications of population change.

Population scientists rely on data produced by the Census Bureau to conduct their research and research training. Thus, we are eager to talk to you today about the agency’s important work and its current funding challenges.”
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**During the meeting: Typical Meeting Flow**

- Say why you are there
  - “To share more information about value of data”
  - “To ask you to increase funding for data”
  - “To discuss significance of an agency, program, or survey.”

- Share no more than three points/statistics to reinforce your assertion.

- Share a personal story to add context.

- If making an “ask,” do it again.

- Give policymaker a chance to respond, talk, and ask questions.
Your meetings will be successful if you can explain:

- Who you are representing.
- Why you requested the meeting.
- Explain clearly the agency, program, or survey.
- Explain the “ask” in clear, concise terms.
- Relate “ask” to issues important to policymaker, district and/or constituents.
- Impress upon staff implications of funding cuts or delays (if applicable).
- Recognize time constraints and remain flexible and positive.
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**Other forms of engagement**

**Letters**
- Send via email using office’s electronic inbox
- Personalize
- Include a clear “ask.”

**Town Hall Meetings**
- Follow guidelines provided by office.
- Be brief, positive, and clear about “ask’
- Prepare and conduct appearance at town hall as you would a one-on-one meeting.

**Social Media**
- Be positive
- Use as a forum for sharing and conveying information.
- Provide links to helpful background information.
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In sum…

• Don’t offer to be a resource, just be a resource!

• Sustain the momentum generated by your initial contact to continue educating staff about agency, program or survey.

• Demonstrate ongoing value of federal support and funding by providing examples of how an agency, program, or survey benefits you, the policymaker’s district and constituents, and the health, well being, and security of the general public.

• Remember turnover is high among staff and elected officials. Your work is never done!

Now it’s your turn…. 