

A Community Call is an effective and efficient way for advocates who have limited travel budgets to connect with their Members of Congress throughout the year. Members of Congress appreciate the opportunity to speak to constituents in the comfort of their Capitol Hill office with constituents, and advocates get the opportunity to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders who represent the concerns of low-income individuals living in the District.

How Do I Organize a Community Call?

Build a Big Tent: Organize a Diverse Group of Community Leaders

Organize a small, but diverse, group of community leaders to participate in the call. These participants could include anti-hunger advocates, afterschool providers, food banks and other emergency food providers, school officials and educational organizations, local elected officials, doctors and others from the health and medical fields, child care providers, religious leaders, law enforcement, and others.

Schedule a Meeting with Your Member of Congress

- Call the Congressional Aide who handles food and nutrition issues for your Member of Congress and request a date and time for the community call. During the call, explain the concept of the community call and what issues the group would like to discuss.
- E-mail a formal invitation the Congressional Aide and the Member's scheduler, including a list of participants (participant name, organization, position, town, and contact info), and background information on the issues you would like to discuss.
- **Tip:** If possible, try to have an advocate in the room with the Member of Congress during the call. If a constituent group is unable to have a representative in the room, FRAC staff is happy to attend in person. This person can facilitate the conversation and give materials to the Member of Congress and Congressional Aide in person.

Organize a Planning Call with All Participants

Organize a call with participants to review the format of the community call, roles, the message, and 'ask' for your Member of Congress.

- Come to agreement on the topics that will be discussed, topics to be avoided, and the common message and 'ask' to your Member of Congress.
- Develop a set of talking points and share any statistical data that you want to share during the call.
- Assign talking points to each advocate so everyone has an opportunity to participate. If any of your partners cannot participate in the actual call, ask them to send a letter of support. Remember to let the Congressional Aide know what topics you would like to discuss in advance by sending an agenda and background materials.

Make The “Ask”

After you discuss the issues with your Member of Congress, make sure someone is specifically tasked to request him or her to do a specific action. Examples include:

- Sponsoring or co-sponsoring a bill
- Signing a “Dear Colleague” letter that may be circulating at the time of the call
- Writing a letter of support to Committee Chair or Ranking Member
- Delivering a “one minute” on the floor of the House in support for a program or proposal
- Initiating any other action that would establish your Member as a champion for child nutrition programs.

Follow-up!

It is crucial to follow-up with your Member of Congress and the Congressional Aide after the call.

For more information...

- ☞ Please let us know how we can help you prepare for a community call.
- ☞ *Questions?* Contact Etienne Melcher, Senior Legislative and Public Affairs Associate, emelcher@frac.org, 202-986-2200 x3012.