

CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE FOR AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Communicating with elected officials and other leaders in pursuit of your Main Street program’s goals requires a clear message that will resonate. Whether you are meeting face-to-face, writing an email or a formal letter, or sharing a message in other forms of media, utilize the process and tips below to ensure that your words make an impact.

BEFORE YOU WRITE

Consider Your Framing

The frame sets the tone and the mindset for the message. Framing can help open the door to make sure your message is received. When crafting an advocacy message, keep in mind any misconceptions related to this issue and how you can reframe. For example, if your Main Street program is perceived as an events organization, consider how you can reframe by sharing information about business impact or development projects.

Understand Your Target

If you’re making a specific request, it’s likely to be a particular individual or group. Take time to do a bit of research:

- Do they have ties to your Main Street district?
Find out where they’re from.
- Have they supported this in the past?
Research their voting record.
- Do they have special influence over your issue?
Know their committee assignments.
- Can you connect to their values?
Understand their issue positions.

Given the immense digital tools at our disposal, always approach any interaction with decisionmakers with at least a little background knowledge tailored to that individual or group.

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE

Establish Who You Are

- Your target hears from many organizations interested in their support every day. Clearly identify yourself and the organization.
- Utilize your elevator pitch or mission and vision statements to concisely convey who the organization is.

State the Problem

- Give a clear statement of the issue at hand. Avoid snowballing into multiple, complex issues.
- Use data to help emphasize the unrealized potential.
- Convey a sense of urgency to help your target prioritize your issue.

Create a Sense of Shared Values

- Beyond facts and data, share authentic and compelling stories that help connect on an emotional level.
- Establish a sense of place. Our Main Streets are the heart of our communities.

Propose the Solution or Request an Action

- Make sure to give your target a way that they can support you. If there is a specific bill, include the number.
- Ask for action. If you hear “no” to your request, ask to follow-up.

A NOTE ON DELIVERY

Keep it concise! An email message should be brief, no more than a few brief paragraphs.

Practice your pitch. For a face-to-face meeting, take time to practice to another person.

Don’t forget follow-up and follow-through. If the official or their staff request more information, respond in a timely manner. If you don’t hear back, send a polite follow-up to keep the conversation going.

LEARN MORE!

Contact us at mainstreetadvocacy@savingplaces.org.

Check out mainstreet.org for additional resources.