

2026 Congressional Visit Guide

A practical guide to preparing for, navigating, and following up after a district visit.



BEFORE THE MEETING

1

Assign a meeting lead

The lead guides the conversation, transitions between speakers, and keeps time so the meeting feels coordinated rather than awkward or rushed.

2

Know the office

Familiarize yourself with the Member, the staffer you are meeting, their committees, priorities, and relevant voting or policy history. Look for a natural point of connection.

3

Prepare one short story

Each participant should have a brief, concrete example of how instability in federal grants could affect their work, community, patients, trainees, jobs, or local partners.

DURING THE MEETING

THE CORE MESSAGE:

1

CONGRESS MADE THE INVESTMENT

Congress appropriates federal funds to advance national priorities. This includes investment in fundamental science research.

2

OMB IS PROPOSING MAJOR NEW AUTHORITY

This would change how federal grants are reviewed, managed, and terminated. It could have significant implications for researchers, institutions, and scientific progress.

3

CONGRESS SHOULD PROTECT ITS ROLE AND PROTECT SCIENCE

Federal investments should remain predictable, merit-based, and accountable to the law Congress enacted.

Typical 15–20 minute meeting flow*

1–2 min
Introductions



2–4 min
Opening ask + connection



8–10 min
Stories + conversation



2–3 min
Restate ask + close

*NOTE: meeting times are variable depending on staffer availability, so be prepared to be flexible.

Start with brief introductions

- Thank the Member or staffer for their time.
- Introduce yourself as a constituent and early-career researcher.
- Keep institutional affiliation secondary unless it helps orient the conversation.

Make it a conversation

- Ask the staffer a question and listen.
- Use the FASEB fact sheet to connect federal funding to local health, jobs, services, or research.
- Share 1–2 short stories; be mindful of time.

Keep the message memorable

- Stay focused on one clear takeaway.
- Use plain language rather than technical or regulatory detail unless staff asks.
- Remember that staff may only report back one sentence from the meeting.

Close clearly

- Restate the ask using the info on the next page.
- Offer to follow up on any unanswered questions.
- Thank them again for their time.
- Leave behind the one-pager.

AFTER THE MEETING

Confirm action items

Make sure your group knows who will send any promised information or answers. Do not invent an answer in the room! Following up is an opportunity to build the relationship.

Send a thank-you

Coordinate with your team lead and send a short thank-you email after the visit. Briefly restate the main takeaway and include any follow-up information you promised.

OMB PROPOSED RULE CHANGES: WHAT MATTERS

THIS IS NOT JUST A UNIVERSITY ISSUE.

OMB's proposed changes would apply government-wide, affecting federal assistance received by **state and local governments, hospitals, nonprofits, businesses, research institutions, and other community organizations.**

WHAT THE PROPOSAL COULD CHANGE

01

CONGRESSIONAL INVESTMENTS BECOME LESS PREDICTABLE

The proposal would expand executive-branch authority to terminate grants or change how funded programs operate **after Congress has provided the money.**

Midstream suspensions or terminations can interrupt:

- Research and clinical trials
- Long-term community programs and services
- Partnerships, equipment purchases, and planned investments

The practical question: What is lost when a taxpayer-funded project is interrupted before it can deliver the result Congress intended to fund?

02

EXPERT REVIEW COULD CARRY LESS WEIGHT

Scientific peer review would remain, but political officials would have greater authority over individual award decisions and would not necessarily need relevant technical expertise.

Scientific merit review is especially important for **basic and fundamental discovery research**, where the eventual payoff may not be obvious at the time an award is made.

The practical question: What discoveries, treatments, technologies, or public benefits could be lost if expert evaluation carries less weight in funding decisions?

03

PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF SCIENCE BECOMES HARDER

Publication is **not an optional part of science**. Sharing results allows taxpayer-funded discoveries to reach other researchers and the public.

Conference participation is also valuable for scientific exchange, professional networks, new collaborations, and career development. Early-career researchers may be **less able to absorb newly shifted costs or restrictions** associated with publishing and presenting their work.

04

COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND U.S. COMPETITIVENESS ARE AT RISK

Unpredictable funding, added administrative burden, and restrictions on legitimate collaboration can make it harder to retain **talent, discoveries, partnerships, and investment in the United States.**

International collaboration helps researchers and communities address problems that **span borders and transcend boundaries**. Think about concrete examples of productive collaboration with international colleagues and what may be at stake if those partnerships become harder to maintain.

WHERE THINGS STAND

SENATE

The Senate acted to delay the proposed rule through **December 11**. They did this through passing a Continuing Resolution on August 8th.

THANK THEM.

HOUSE

The House must still vote on the Continuing Resolution passed by the Senate as funding legislation moves forward.

APPLAUD THE SENATE, EXPRESS HOPE FOR THE HOUSE

BOTTOM LINE: A temporary pause buys time; it does not permanently resolve the underlying proposal. The issue continues.

A STRONG 30-SECOND FRAME

"I support strong oversight of federal funding and making sure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly. My concern is that these proposed changes would make grants less predictable after Congress has already made the investment. That can interrupt long-term work, add administrative costs, and shift individual funding decisions away from technical expertise. Congress should protect the stability and integrity of the investments it has already approved."

FAQs + Tips for a Strong Visit

Practical answers for the situations participants are most likely to encounter.

Who will I be meeting with?

It varies. State leads may request a meeting with the Member, but participants will often meet with a Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant, or another staffer depending on their availability. Your state lead should let you know who is expected.

If I am “just” meeting with a staffer, is the meeting still valuable?

Yes. Staffers do much of the policy work in congressional offices. Treat the meeting as a chance to build a direct relationship and position yourself as a useful resource.

Am I representing my university, SNAP, or another institution?

No. You are representing yourself first as a constituent and second as an early-career researcher. Do not speak on behalf of your university/ employer unless you are authorized to do so.

Does everyone need to speak?

The lead guides the conversation, transitions between people, and keeps time. Everyone is welcome to participate, especially by sharing one brief personal story or joining the discussion.

What if I don’t know the answer to a question?

Say that you do not know and are happy to follow up. Do not guess. A thoughtful follow-up can help establish trust with the staffer and their office.

How do I build trust with the office?

Have a conversation rather than giving a lecture. Ask questions, listen to concerns, respond to what the staffer is actually saying, and avoid making the interaction feel transactional.

What if the conversation starts to go badly?

Stay calm and keep the conversation open. If appropriate, acknowledge the reaction and ask what prompted it. You may be able to clarify misinformation or understand the office’s concern. Staffers often maintain a neutral “poker face” so do not overread a lack of visible reaction.

How should I handle politically sensitive topics?

Read the room. If a topic is likely to derail the conversation, keep the focus on the visit’s core purpose. When discussing training or opportunity programs, “workforce development” may be more useful language in some offices than more politically charged terminology.

What should I avoid?

Avoid personal partisan politics, donation or voting-history discussions, condescending or “ivory tower” language, and framing the issue as only a university problem. Keep the focus on practical consequences for constituents and communities.

Where can I research the office?

Review the Member’s official and campaign websites, committee assignments, and reputable reporting. Pay particular attention to Appropriations and science-related authorization committees, since those roles can create a natural connection to the visit.

REMINDERS

- **Be polite and professional.** The goal is to persuade, build trust, and leave a positive impression.
- **Stay on topic.** Staff time is limited, and most offices will not be experts in your field.
- **Be honest.** Never make up an answer; offer to follow up.
- **Think beyond universities.** Federal grants also support community health centers, farmers, first responders, nonprofits, businesses, and local governments.
- **Be human and genuine.** A real connection is more memorable than a perfect presentation.

Use the SNAP Congressional Visit Guide for: the core message, Senate vs. House opening, OMB policy summary, and the specific congressional ask. Use the FASEB fact sheet for local numbers and examples.