



6th Annual Convening on Healthy Food Access



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Telling Your HFFI Story

Thank you for meeting with Congressional offices during the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Convening in Washington, D.C.! Meeting face-to-face with your elected officials is a great way to build relationships and learn where a member stands on an issue. **The purpose of these meetings is to educate members about your work to improve access to healthy food in your community.** This visit is **not lobbying**, but rather **an opportunity to tell your story** – describe your program, the community you work in, and what healthy food access means to your community.

We encourage you to share impacts of your work, including job numbers, capital leveraged, or other data / research that you have related to your projects and efforts. Be sure reference the “HFFI Messaging and Talking Points” handout, get / give business cards, and leave any materials with the office that you have brought, especially the packet. **Finally, have fun!**

The information in this guide includes:

-  Tips for the meeting
-  Ideas for follow up

Materials for Your Meeting

We will provide you with a packet of materials to discuss in your meeting. These materials will include:

- A brochure on HFFI
- A list of HFFI organizational supporters
- Leave behind materials summarizing efforts in your state / district
- Suggested talking points to use during your meetings with Capitol Hill staff
- A map of the Capitol Complex

Helpful Tips for Your Meeting

Know the environment that you will be walking into

- Once you have gotten to the building, always double-check the member room listing in each building. A directory of offices is located next to each elevator
- It is a maze moving around the Capitol Complex! You will find a building map in your packets and there are floor directories on each hallway. Don't be shy— security guards can help point you in the right direction.

Make the most of your time—you will have anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes

- You may meet in an office, on the couch in the lobby, out in the hallway, or they may take you down to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee. There are limited meeting spaces in these offices— go with the flow.
- Figure out with whom you are meeting—is this person a Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant, Legislative Correspondent? What do they do in the office? You may need to tailor your discussion accordingly.
- Regardless of the staff position, make the most of the time you have with this person and provide information based upon what they know.
- Deliver the information clearly and concisely. Some of these staff are dealing with three, five, six issues—think about if that was your job, how would you want the information to be delivered—quickly and to the point.



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The Meeting

Introduce yourself

- Start the meeting by thanking the member or staffer for taking time to meet with you.
- Each person in the group should then introduce themselves.
- Make sure to get staff business cards and leave contact information for everyone in the meeting.
- Describe where you're from and why you have taken the time to come to D.C. and participate in the *Sixth Annual Convening on Healthy Food Access*.

Be excited and passionate about your work

- Members of Congress or his/her staffers have numerous meetings every day. Help them remember the meeting by showing your passion and excitement around your project.

Ask Questions

- If there is an opportunity to ask questions, do so. Is there a specific issue regarding the healthy food access that is of particular importance to you? Look for connecting points in the conversation. Have an exchange.

It's OK to not have all the answers

- Your member of Congress or his / her staffer may ask you a question you do not know how to answer. This type of situation is a perfect opportunity for you to follow-up with their office— either before you leave DC or when you're back home.

Do not try to fill the space

- When the meeting is over, it's over. Be respectful of their time. Even if it only lasted five minutes, that short amount of time could be well spent.

Meeting Follow-Up

1. **Send a thank you:** Send a "thank you" note to the member and any staffers for their time. This letter should be sent within a week of the meeting.
2. **Gather and send follow up information:** If there were any requests for further information, or questions that were not answered, it is important to follow up with that information. Please contact The Food Trust if you need help with this (contact information below); these materials should be sent within a week of the meeting.
3. **Share what you learned:** Feel free to send an email or call The Food Trust to give us a brief update on how the meeting went. Gabriella Mora, Senior Associate for Policy and Government Affairs can be reached at gmora@thefoodtrust.org or at 215-806-0253. Also, be sure to complete the online feedback survey you receive following the event.