

Take Action: Host a Successful Legislative Site Visit

THE OPPORTUNITY

Inviting your legislators to tour your afterschool or summer learning program gives them a firsthand experience of the impact afterschool has on students, families, and communities. Follow these simple steps and you will be well on your way to hosting a successful visit with your legislator!

THE INVITATION

1) Plan ahead! Legislators have very busy schedules, so it is important to ask early! The Georgia General Assembly is considered a part time legislature - meaning that they are only in session for about three to four months at the beginning of the year. Given that this is a particularly busy time for them at the Gold Dome, it is best to wait until after session is over to invite them.

2) Identify Your State Legislators. At the state level, your program is represented by one state representative and one state senator. Keep in mind that your personal legislators may be different than the legislators that represent your program - although they still likely represent a lot of the kids that attend your program! To find out who your state legislators are, go to www.openstates.org/find_your_legislator.

3) Make the ask! When inviting your lawmakers to visit your program, it is best to send an email AND call their office. To find your legislators' contact information, go to www.legis.ga.gov. Consider using our sample email language (<https://bit.ly/2Xy7YTY>) to make it easy!

3) Stay local! Given their busy schedules, lawmakers are most concerned about what is happening in their district. Make sure that your program is in their district and emphasize that you are local when communicating with the state legislator or their staff.

4) Be persistent! Legislators receive many emails and therefore it is important to not be discouraged if you do not get a response or the response you wanted right away. If you do not get a response in a couple weeks, it is appropriate to politely reach back out reminding them of your invitation and asking if they have any questions.

5) Be flexible! Do NOT send the legislator one date and time for them to visit your program. Keep in mind that they have very busy schedules, so be flexible when scheduling the visit!



THE PREPARATION

1) **Celebrate!** If you have scheduled a site visit with your state legislator, that is cause for celebration! Share the exciting news with your program's staff, parents, and partners.

2) **Plan the visit.** Be sure that you have a plan for the visit and discuss it with staff and senior leadership. Here are a couple ideas for activities:

- Give the legislator a tour of your program
- Share a personal story
- Engage youth voice (e.g. let a student lead the tour)
- Host a student performance
- Stage the room
- Showcase the variety of activities your program offers
- Invite parents, partners, and funders

3) **Touch base the day before.** Check in with the legislator and/or their assistant the day before the visit to make sure you are all set to go. Offer to provide directions or confirm the address.

4) **Gather materials.** Put together a packet of materials to hand the legislator that summarize the impact of your program and the broader landscape of afterschool in Georgia (Hint: GSAN's fact sheets are a great place to start: <http://bit.ly/1L6nLdx>). Be sure to have at least two packets in case they have someone with them.

5) **Invite press.** Draft a press release and send to local media a week before the visit. Follow-up two days before the event to politely ask if they received your press release and are planning to attend the visit.

THE VISIT

1) **Be ready!** Print out extra copies of the run of show and press release to have on hand.

2) **Take lots of pictures!** Assign an adult or older teen to take pictures of the visit. Site visits are great photo opportunities for the Congressman and can help promote afterschool to a larger audience!

3) **Get social!** Be active on social media before, during, and after the visit. Mention or tag the legislator in your posts and photos.



THE FOLLOW-UP

1) **Send a thank you!** If a Congressman does visit your program, make sure to follow up and thank the Congressman and any of the Congressman's staff who you interacted with for their time. Include electronic copies of any materials you gave the attendees and photos from the visit.

2) **Let us know!** If a Congressman is scheduled to visit your program, please email info@afterschoolga.org to let us know. We would love to promote their visit and assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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