

Tips for Community Engagement in Body Confidence Advocacy


The primary role of advocates is to make it easy for decision-makers to give us what we want. Engage your advocate community in a conversation that is designed specifically to share personal stories and perspectives about the issues. Conversations shaped by lived experiences elicit deeper relationships that can apply pressure and influence on lawmakers and other decision-makers.

This document provides an overview and a checklist for meaningful conversations that allow individuals to be influential advocates.


Tips:

- Leave the data-filled PowerPoint presentation at the office. There is nothing worse than defining a community through the data YOU brought to them. Let the community define itself.
- Include volunteers, co-workers, board members, and partner organizations in the conversation.
- Be prepared ahead of time with well-thought-out questions that focus on solutions and encourage thinking. Open-ended questions elicit personal, real-life experiences and provide an opportunity for advocates to look and listen to individuals who share their mutual passion.
- Be a good listener and engage in dialogue. The ideal meeting is a dialogue, not a monologue. Be flexible and allow the conversation to be a give and take.
- Build a relationship: When it comes to advocacy, it is all about relationships. Investing time in getting to know your volunteers, as well as decision-makers, is time well spent. Communicate frequently, check-in, ask questions, offer yourself as a resource, share new information, and work to get to know these individuals and to have them know you. Remember that your goal is to build an ongoing relationship.
- If your community conversations are held in a district served by key lawmakers, consider inviting the lawmaker to join you - BUT make sure to engage them as equal participants in conversation with other community members – not as guest speakers.

Organizer's Checklist for Effective **In-Person** Community Meetings

	Activity
	Designate lead organizer for meeting
	Secure date, time, and location that prioritize the convenience of those most impacted by the legislation you are proposing
	Create invitation – with RSVP and directions
	Develop a broad invitation list with contact information
	Invite local organizations to co-sponsor and co-brand the event
	Develop a meeting agenda with times and roles
	Develop a script and assign speaking roles and practice with a “dry run”
	Assign “mingler” to welcome all attendees as they arrive to put them at ease
	If dignitaries will be in attendance, assign someone to serve as informal “handler” to make sure they feel special
	Collect RSVPs – Get phone, email, and any accommodations (sign language, dietary needs, translator, childcare, etc.)
	Create participant contact list – including email/phone numbers in case of last-minute changes
	Send a reminder two days before the meeting (via email, text, and social media)
	Secure LCD projector AND laptop if needed
	Secure ASL interpreter, translator services, and childcare if needed
	Test and practice presentations in advance
	Get refreshments (preferably donated) – <i>avoid allergy inducing foods like nuts</i>
	Set up the room with seating that easily accommodates different body sizes, for instance having some chairs without arms
	Bring name tags, markers, pens, masking tape, and flip chart
	Create signs to direct people to the meeting
	Bring a sign-in sheet to capture name, email, phone, and home address of attendees
	Include sign-on letters of support
	Assign a volunteer to photograph the event – be sure to have photo release forms to get participant permission to use their image
	Invite locate reporters, if appropriate
	Designate a competent notetaker to capture meeting minutes, key discussion points, and action items
	Copy materials and bring participant packets
	Secure onsite help for the day of -- room set-up, registration, seating, and clean-up
	Recognize all dignitaries by name and title at the beginning of the event
	Send thank-you notes and meeting minutes within 3 business days - highlighting assignments, key decisions, and next steps

Organizer’s Checklist for Effective **Virtual** Community Meetings

	Activity
	Identify day/time that is convenient for those most impacted by the legislation you are proposing
	Send virtual invitation and require registration to capture attendees’ contact information
	Invite local organizations to co-sponsor and co-brand the event
	Develop a meeting agenda with times and roles
	Develop a script and assign speaking roles and practice with a “dry run”
	Circulate a meeting reminder 24-48 hours in advance
	Recognize all dignitaries by name and title at the beginning of the event
	Designate a facilitator to track meeting time
	Designate a competent notetaker to capture meeting minutes, key discussion points, and action items
	Recognize all dignitaries by name and title at the beginning of the event
	Remember to keep all attendees on mute, until they are scheduled to speak
	Send thank-you note and include meeting notes within 3 business days
	Other?