



**Holding a meeting with your decision-maker** is the ideal opportunity to persuade him/her (lobby him/her) to take action and help you accomplish your goal. Having this face-to-face meeting offers you a unique chance to talk about your issues in a way that cannot be communicated through an email, call, or letter. It is a powerful tactic that creates an open dialogue or negotiation with your decision-maker and can help establish a relationship between you and the decision-maker. This provides a foundation for future communication.

### Use this Tactic if:

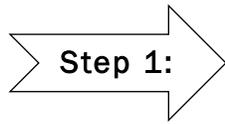
- You are able to arrange an in-person meeting
- You have a clear ask and want your decision-maker to take action on your behalf
- You need to demonstrate that you care about an issue
- You want to follow-up on a call or email that didn't have a positive result or to make sure that things are getting done

### Do Not Use this Tactic if:

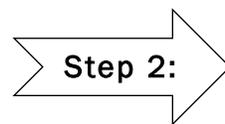
- You haven't done the necessary preparations to gather the data, allies or arguments to make a meeting useful

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## Steps for Holding a Meeting with a Decision-Maker

 **Step 1:** **Review your overall project goal(s) to adjust your ask to your target.** Keep in mind your target's level of authority (state, city, local, school).

- Class Goal:
- Target for this Tactic:
- Ask:

 **Step 2:** **Structure an effective argument to present.**

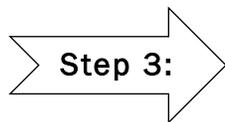
In order to design a persuasive argument, use the following structure:

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourselves and thank your decision-maker for meeting you.
- **Issue:** Introduce the topic to be discussed. Grab the decision-maker's attention with a strong hook.
- **Position:** Take a stand and make your "ask" — what you want your decision maker to do and how they can do that.
- **Points:** Present your key points or messages to convince your decision-maker. Talk to him/her about why you care about this issue.
- **Counter-Points:** Address potential objections or disagreements the decision-maker might have.
- **Conclusion:** Restate your position and points. Identify your next steps.

## Tip for Structuring an Effective Argument:

When designing an argument, you can use several different methods of persuasion:

<p>Tell a story about a personal experience or reason why you care about the issue.</p> <p><i>Ex: Having seen my best friend go through a pregnancy as a teenager, I understand the importance of having a health education class in schools.</i></p>	<p>Create an argument around facts, statistics and logic.</p> <p><i>Ex: This study shows that people who breathe in secondhand smoke are just as likely to develop health problems as smokers. That is why we need a ban on smoking in public parks.</i></p>	<p>Create an appeal based on emotion. This type of argument taps into shared feelings or values.</p> <p><i>Ex: Students in this city shouldn't have to walk five miles to get to school everyday. Every child in America has a right to a free public education, and it isn't right that students in the city don't get a bus while students in rich neighborhoods do.</i></p>
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## Schedule and plan the meeting.

Use the following checklist to make sure you don't forget anything.



### Scheduling the Meeting:

- Contact the decision-maker with a professional call or email (see pages 42 or 46 in your handbook), briefly stating who you are, what you would like to discuss, how much time it will take, and times and locations at which you are available.
- One to two days before the scheduled meeting, call and confirm the time and place.

### Planning the Meeting:

- Make sure you have a written plan for the meeting.
  - Make sure you have a clear goal. A goal identifies what you want from your audience by the end of the meeting (may or may not be your entire "ask").
  - Write notes or an outline of your argument that will keep you on track during the meeting and make sure you cover all of your points.
  - Identify your plan for follow up. For example: Let your decision-makers know you intend to check back with them within a week.
- Prepare responses to questions or points your decision-maker is likely to raise:
  - How would I (the decision-maker) accomplish your ask?
  - How many people does this issue bother?
  - Has anyone tried to fix it before?
  - I'm not sure I can do anything about this issue, try talking to someone else.
- Determine who will present which parts. Assign one person to begin the meeting and one person to end it.



- Practice delivering your argument and make edits as needed. When practicing, make sure to factor in timing.
- If you are using visual aids or handouts for your presentation, make sure they are ready 24 hours in advance of your presentation.

### **Step 4: Meet your decision-maker!**

#### **Before the Meeting:**

- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your scheduled meeting and gather with your group. Review your talking points once more before you present to your decision-maker.
- Remember to **dress professionally**. (Find other tips on professionalism on page 113 of your handbook.)

#### **During the Meeting:**

- Everyone should briefly introduce themselves at the start of the meeting. Shake hands and make eye-contact when introducing yourself.
- You may want to share a few unique personal details about yourselves to show that your group represents a variety of voices. This can include your school, age, neighborhood, or why you have chosen to work on this issue.
- Present your argument to the decision-maker. Provide real-life examples wherever possible.
- Make your “ask” of your decision maker. Ask for a commitment and listen carefully to the response.
  - > Decision-makers often need some time to consider supporting or opposing a cause, and will likely have questions about the issue. Make sure you answer the questions you know, and write down questions you don’t have answers to so you can email your decision-maker after the meeting.
  - > Don’t take their hesitancy or questions as rejection; many decision makers need proof that you are committed to the issue before they agree to take action.
- Remember to thank them before you leave.
- Get business cards from your decision-maker and anyone else you met during the meeting.

#### **After the Meeting:**

- Meet with your group outside the meeting location to compare your reactions and identify any follow-up work that needs to be done.



**Step 5:** Follow up.

- Send an email to the meeting’s participants thanking them for their time, restating your key messages, and reviewing identified next steps. These thank you notes help you build long-term relationships with these decision-makers.
- Make sure to follow up with the plans you stated during your presentation.

**Sample Meeting Script**

<b>Introduction</b>	Hi Mr. Trimble. I am Maria Lopez. I am Michael Brown. I am Josh Goldman.	
<b>Issue</b>	We’re here to discuss public transportation for young people. Public school students in Providence use buses to get to school, go home, and travel around the city every day.	The issue is clear and introduced immediately.
<b>Position</b>	We’re here with the Rhode Island Coalition for Transportation Change to ask you to support Senator O’Grady’s Bill funding RIPTA for the next five years.	The “ask” is specific.
<b>Points</b>	Many of us do not have any other method of transportation to get us to school, and the school department doesn’t have the funding to give us private busses. Especially in the winter, we need RIPTA to get to school. If they continue to run a deficit, fewer children will be able to get free passes, and will have to walk 2-3 miles just to attend public school.	Key arguments are presented.
<b>Counter-Points</b>	We know that this bill sends a large amount of money to RIPTA, and that the state budget is being heavily debated right now. However, we ask you to consider all the students, children and families in Providence who depend on RIPTA to get to school, work or home.	
<b>Conclusion</b>	Please support this bill. By doing so you will be supporting the children of Providence. When can we expect a decision about your vote? How do you recommend we follow up with you?  Thank you for your time and attention.	The students explain that they will stay engaged with this issue.



### Draft Your Own Meeting Script

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Issue, with Hook</b>	
<b>Position</b>	
<b>Points</b>	
<b>Counter-Points</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	