



2024 Congressional Visits Day Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is the cost to participate?

The Congressional Visits Day is free for participants, but space is limited and priority is granted to individuals participating in the supplemental communications and advocacy training program. Participants are responsible for paying for their own travel, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses.

Should you wish to participate in the Communications Boot Camp for Scientists on April 15-16, 2024, there is a cost for this two-day training program. The registration fee covers instruction, materials and resources, and lunch during the program.

2) What can I expect to get out of the event?

Participants learn how to effectively engage with policymakers, how science policy is formulated, and about trends in federal research spending.

Participants generally take part in five to eight meetings with members of Congress or their staff. This includes two or three meetings with the participant's congressional delegation and several more meetings with other congressional offices.

The event is also an opportunity to meet other scientists with an interest in science policy and communications.

3) What are my responsibilities as a participant?

Participants are responsible for arranging and paying for their travel, lodging, and meals.

Participants are encouraged to spend about an hour in advance of the event to research and prepare talking points on the benefits of federal investments in science, especially to their local region.

Participants are required to attend a half-day mandatory training session on April 16 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. (These times may adjust slightly as the program agenda is finalized.)

4) Where will the event take place?

Both the training program and congressional meetings will take place in Washington, DC. The location for the training will be announced shortly. The congressional meetings will take place on Capitol Hill.

5) When should I arrive in/depart from Washington, DC?

The Congressional Visits Day and associated training will take place on April 15-17, 2024. The Communications Boot Camp training program will take place on April 15 from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm and will continue on April 16 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. (These times may adjust slightly as the program agenda is finalized.) Meetings with lawmakers will be scheduled on April 17.

Participants can expect to finish with their congressional meetings by 4:30 pm on April 17. It is recommended that individuals not book departing flights on April 17 from Washington Reagan Airport (DCA) prior to 6:00 pm and from Washington Dulles (IAD) prior to 7:00 pm.

6) What is the closest airport?

Two airports service Washington, DC. Washington Reagan National Airport (DCA) is the closest to downtown DC and is about a 30-minute Metro ride from Capitol Hill. Dulles International Airport (IAD) is located west of DC and is about an hour-long Metro ride from Capitol Hill. Taxi and shared ride services are also available from DCA and IAD to downtown Washington, DC.

7) Where should I stay?

The training and congressional meetings take place in downtown Washington, DC. Capitol Hill is serviced by two Metro stations: Union Station and Capitol South. The exact location for the training will be announced shortly, but it will likely be within walking distance of a Metro station.

There are numerous hotels in downtown DC to choose from. Budget conscious travelers may prefer to stay at a hotel adjacent to a Metro station in suburban Virginia (e.g. Arlington). Airbnb and similar services may also offer lodging options.

8) What is the best way to get around the city?

Metro rail and bus serves the greater Washington, DC area. More information is available at <http://wmata.com/>. Taxis and ride shares are abundantly available.

9) What should I wear?

Participants should wear business attire for their congressional meetings. Business or business casual attire is acceptable for the trainings.

10) How can I prepare for the congressional meetings?

Participants should spend time in advance of the event to prepare talking points for the congressional meetings. Resources from the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) can be accessed at <https://www.aibs.org/policy/resources.html#top>. More guidance will be sent closer to the event.

11) Can I bring along handouts?

Participants are welcome to bring along a document to distribute to congressional staff. Appropriate examples of handouts include information about your organization/institution or a policy-relevant paper that is understandable by non-scientists. AIBS policy staff can help you to select appropriate documents.

12) Should I bring business cards?

Yes. It remains the custom in Washington, DC to exchange business cards during meetings. This is particularly true when meeting with congressional offices, where members and staff may talk to dozens of individuals a day. A business card is one way to strengthen the impression you make and to initiate a relationship.