

# How to Arrange a Meeting with an Elected Official

Meetings, including video calls using online tools, can be an effective way to connect directly with an elected official to ensure that they have heard your concerns.

This resource provides tips to help individuals arrange meetings with elected officials about issues that matter to them. If you have questions that aren't answered here or would like more support, reach out to the UCalgary Government Relations team: [ucalgary.ca/government-relations#contact-us](https://ucalgary.ca/government-relations#contact-us)

## WHY ARRANGE A MEETING?

People meet with elected officials for a variety of reasons:

- To encourage a specific action or outcome (e.g. encouraging increased public investment in post-secondary institutions)
- To discourage a specific action or outcome (e.g. discouraging cuts to post-secondary institution budgets)
- To increase awareness and understanding of a particular issue or concern (e.g. the value of post-secondary education and research in Alberta)
- To make sure elected officials know that an issue is important to their constituents.
- To build an ongoing relationship with an elected official.

## WHO SHOULD I MEET WITH?

- Seek to meet with elected officials at the level of government that makes decisions about the issue you want to talk about. For example, the provincial government makes decisions about the Campus Alberta grant that supports university operations.
- Meet with your elected representative for the constituency that you live in. For example, if you live in Brentwood, you'd contact the MLA for Calgary-Varsity about provincial issues and the MP for Calgary Confederation about federal issues.

## HOW TO REQUEST A MEETING

- Make your request in writing and follow-up with a call to the elected official's constituency office.
- Make sure they know that you are a constituent.
- Let them know what issue you wish to discuss.

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- Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting. If possible, try to request a meeting during a break week when your elected official is available for meetings in their constituency. For meetings with provincial officials, check the Legislative Assembly of Alberta’s sessional calendar for MLA availability: <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/pro/SessionalCalendar.pdf>
- Sometimes, elected officials may be very busy and unable to meet due to other commitments. If your elected official is unavailable to meet, indicate that you are open to meeting with a member of their staff instead.

## PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

- Do some research in advance to identify if the elected official you are meeting with has previously stated views on the issue that you want to discuss. This information may be conveyed through quotes in the media, votes on legislation, or posts on social media sites.
- Identify your objectives for the meeting).
- Plan out what you want to say in advance. Outline key messages that you want to convey and prepare supporting examples. Ensure that you are sharing information that is factual and plan to share personal stories and anecdotes about why the issue you are meeting about matters to you. For example:
  - How you’ve used the skills and experiences you gained through post-secondary education.
  - Ways that post-secondary education issues affect you and your family, especially if you have children or other family attending or planning to attend (e.g. high-quality education, student experiences, attracting and retaining faculty, tuition and fees, etc.).
  - How post-secondary education and research affects your organization or the industry you work in (e.g. attracting talent, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation).

## DURING THE MEETING

- Show up early and be patient. It isn’t uncommon for elected officials to be late or have meetings interrupted by other business.
- Be conscious of time. It’s typical for meetings with government officials to be 30 minutes or less. Stick to your intended topic so that you don’t run out of time.
- Thank the elected official for taking the time to meet with you.
- Introduce yourself by sharing a little bit of information about yourself – where you live in their constituency, your educational background, work and career, community involvement.

- Share key messages that you prepared with the elected official and try to keep the discussion conversational.
- If the elected official asks you questions about the issue, answer from your own experience and refrain from generalizing or exaggerating. It's okay to say that you don't know the answer to a question (you don't have to be an expert on everything related to the topic you are discussing) or to follow-up with an answer after the meeting.
- Keep a respectful, courteous tone. Remember that they are taking time to hear from you about your needs, interests, and opinions and the purpose of the meeting is to share your perspective. During the conversation, focus on your personal concerns, perceptions, and experiences. Be careful not to assume malicious intent or criticize the elected official or the government for things they may have done or not done on the issue at hand.
- If the elected official makes a statement that you don't agree with, don't argue with them. It is reasonable to express that you have a different perception or understanding of the issue and share the facts as you understand them. If it is clear that the individual will not support your position, you can express your hope that they will consider and look into your viewpoint. Even if you disagree, you always want to keep lines of communication open for discussing future issues.

## AFTER THE MEETING

- Send a follow-up email to thank the elected official for their time, reiterate your message, and send any follow-up materials (if applicable).
- If you took a photo with the elected official during your meeting, consider posting it on social media to publicly thank them for their time and consideration of the issues.
- Consider when you'd like to meet with the elected official again and reach out to arrange another meeting when it's appropriate. It can be beneficial to build a positive relationship with your elected representatives over time.