



Site Visits – A Step-by-Step Guide

A site visit is the most effective advocacy strategy available to afterschool programs. Inviting a legislator to visit your program allows them to see what goes on in a program and hear from students, parents, and community partners about the positive impact your program has made.

Ready to set up a site visit?

1. Select the day

First select a few potential days to host a site visit. If you are planning a site visit in January through April, keep in mind that state representatives and senators will be in session in Des Moines Monday through Thursday and will have limited availability. If you are asking a federal legislator to attend a site visit, pick a few dates during the next Congressional recess when they will be back in Iowa.

Check out your schedule and pick a few days with activities that you would like to highlight to legislators. Select a day a few weeks out to give legislators time to schedule the visit and you time to organize the visit.

2. Reach out to your legislator

The next step is to reach out to a legislator. If you would like to host several legislators at your program it is best to schedule a separate visit for each.

Below is an email template for reaching out to your legislator. You could reach out via a phone call or in-person first and then follow up with an email.

Dear [Representative/Senator] [NAME],

[Organization Name] would like to invite you to visit our program at [school or site name if have multiple sites] and see afterschool in action.

[1-2 sentences providing a summary or background on your program and the services/activities you offer students]

When you visit, our staff, parents, and students will be on hand to show you our program and all that we are doing to strengthen student success and support working families.

Are you available the afternoon of [potential dates]? Once we have a date and time set, I will follow up with more details and a tentative schedule for the visit.

I look forward to hearing from you!

[Name]

[Position and Organization]

3. Create a schedule

Plan your visit for 60 minutes. You will want to include a tour of your program, highlight an activity, and provide opportunities for the legislator to meet with families, community partners, students, and other stakeholders.

Sample schedule:

3:30 p.m. – Legislator arrives. Introduce yourself and staff to your legislator, and provide them with a brief overview of your program.

3:40 p.m. – Begin tour of your program. Use this time to introduce your talking points on the impact your program has made on students and the community, and the importance of afterschool.

3:50 p.m. – Visit a STEM activity or other engaging activity going on at your program.

4:05 p.m. – Meet with families in a classroom. Parents will have time to share their experience with the program and ask questions of the legislator. Allow legislator time to speak if they would like.

4:20 p.m. – Speak with the legislator one on one to wrap up the visit. Thank them for visiting your program, reiterate talking points, hand them any materials you have prepared, and make an ask.

4. Reach out to families and partners

Two weeks out from the site visit reach out to families and partners of your program to invite them to meet your legislator and share their positive experiences with afterschool. Give them a specific time to show up and feel free to share a one pager with them about your program so they feel more comfortable and prepared to speak.

5. Reach out to media

A week before the visit, reach out to your local tv stations and newspapers about the visit. Send them a media advisory with the basic details of the visit as well as a short summary of your program. Let your legislator know that there may be media coverage during the visit so they are not surprised the day of.

6. Day of

What should you have on hand for your legislator?

- Provide the legislator with a brochure of your program and any other relevant materials.
- Share 1-2 brief success stories that highlight the importance of afterschool.
- Cover 1-2 talking points from the message map on page 7-8.
- Provide opportunities for your legislator to interact with students and ask questions.
- If available, provide opportunities for the legislator to meet with parents and community partners.
- End with an ask of your legislator! (Find some ideas on pg. 10)

7. Follow Up

Don't forget to follow up with your legislator after the visit. Send a thank you note within one week to your legislator, be sure to:

- thank them for their time
- reiterate the talking points you covered during the visit
- include any additional information they requested during the visit

Follow up with any media who were at the site visit to track media coverage of the day. If there is media coverage, be sure to share it with your program's families, staff, partners, students, and the IAA.

Let the Iowa Afterschool Alliance know how the site visit went. Your feedback will help us better track statewide advocacy efforts and prioritize legislative targets. We can also help you track media coverage.