

In-District Roundtables

During congressional recesses, which typically happen several times per year, policymakers return to their district or state to meet with constituents. During this time, offices look for ways to engage with constituents to learn more about the priorities within the community. Hosting a roundtable discussion is one opportunity to connect with your policymakers about how their funding support enables your neuroscience discoveries.

Elements of a Roundtable:

To schedule a roundtable, call your policymaker's local office — not the D.C. office — and ask to speak with the scheduler. You can locate your policymaker's website at govtrack.us. Briefly introduce yourself as a constituent and explain that you'd like to host a small roundtable to discuss the benefits of scientific research. Clearly state the date(s), location, and the participants. Advocates should also ask if they would like to have any press present, which would be beneficial to both you and the policymaker. If so, work with your institution and partners at SfN to coordinate.

Your roundtable should be held at your institution or a neutral location, such as a library. Discussions should include no more than 4–5 researchers who are constituents; a small group is more effective as it lends itself to a personal discussion. You should also diversify the research backgrounds and institutions of the participants when possible.

It is important to go into any meeting with a policymaker's office with concrete requests and desired outcomes. Participants should meet prior to the roundtable to prepare to review talking points and what angle each participant will take. Be sure to determine the priority "ask" and who will propose this to the policymaker.

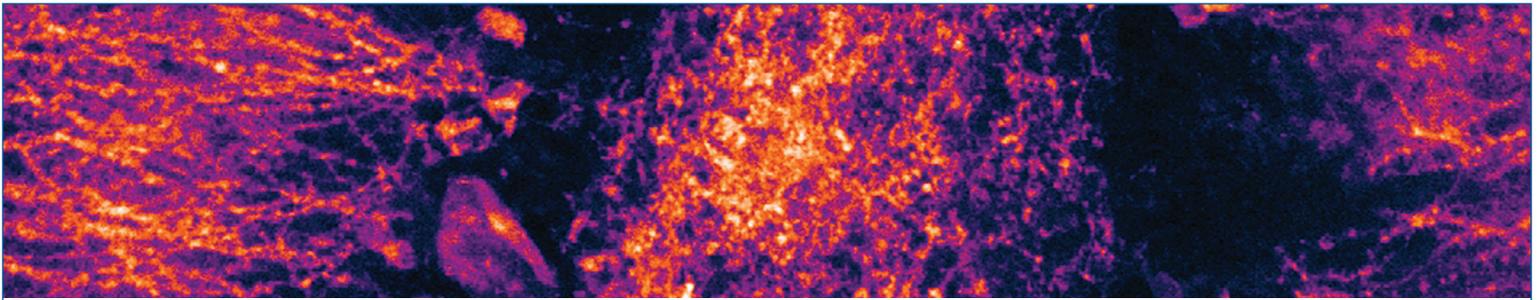
The elements of a roundtable are similar to a congressional meeting, and **all** participants should share their research specialty. In advance of the meeting consider:

- ▶ Who will open the discussion;
- ▶ What order people will speak in;
- ▶ What handouts will be presented;
- ▶ The "ask;" and
- ▶ Who will close the meeting.

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The structure of a roundtable ensures that everyone will speak. Therefore, all participants should prepare a concise and compelling research story — see our handout titled “Make Effective Storytelling Your Advocacy Ally.” The most memorable meetings include personal stories that tie your work to Congressional support. By putting a face to the issue, these stories are likely to register with policymakers more than basic facts and figures. It’s also important to allow your guest to ask questions as the goal is to create a discussion and not to give a presentation.

Follow-up

It’s important to send thank you emails to the policymaker and any staff who helped to coordinate the event. In your email offer to be a resource for further information — this is essential to the relationship building process.

You should also share your experience on social media and connect with the local press to garner support of the public and gain support for the policymakers. For example, you can pitch opinion pieces to your local media outlets highlighting the positive experience, thanking the policymaker for their support, and accentuating the importance of their commitment to neuroscience. See our related resource titled “Leveraging Your Local Media.”

Be sure to connect with your advocacy partners at advocacy@sfn.org for current priority “asks” or at any point in this process for scheduling assistance and resources.

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