

# Communicating with Congress

NCDCA Region I Conference  
4/30/2012

## Background

- Session of the same name held during NCDCA Winter Meeting in Jan. 2013
- Presenters: Lauren Brackett (Staffer, U.S. Senate); Kate Ostrander (Staffer, U.S. H.O.R.)
- Vicki Watson e-mail of 2/5/2013

## Basics

- Establish a relationship with the person in your Congressional members' office who handles housing policy (or Legis. Dir.)
- Communicate throughout the year.
- At first meeting (or for new staff) give a summary of how CPD block grant programs operate in your district/state.
- Keep them informed of news/events.

## Meetings

- Come prepared with facts, figures, grant amounts, grant reductions, leveraged amounts, accomplishments, etc.
- Be flexible, plan on 15 min. meeting
- If member not supportive, try to find a partner to bring with you.
- Do research on your member, find out if they serve on a relevant committee.

## Meetings

- Illustrate differences between programs.
- Explain why the programs are essential; "entitlement" has a negative connotation.
- Put a face to the programs; bring a beneficiary; pictures of activities in action; testimonials; etc.
- Be brief; speak in "plain English"; leave copies of comprehensive, simple backup.

## Meetings

- With abolishment of earmarks; reinforce how grants fill those gaps. (District would otherwise not have those programs.)
- If member does not serve on an appropriations committee, ask them to put in good word with appropriators regarding increased funding.
- Avoid admin requests; not a good time...

## Meetings



- Make a specific request; don't just talk about what you do (although important).
- Request could be for more \$\$\$; attend a CD Week event; read a floor piece; etc.
- Let them know which projects were/are funded by CDBG/HOME.
- Mention CDBG as a disaster resource.
- Come across as a partner/resource.

## Follow Up



- Follow up is very important; the face to face is not enough.
- Send a thank you e-mail or letter to those present; summarize the points you made; avoid long-winded communications; don't send large attachments.
- Repeat the request from the meeting.
- Talk about impact of decreased funding.

## Annual Checklist



- Ask members to sign onto CDBG/HOME support "Dear Colleague" letters. (Ask Mayor/Selectmen/Subgrantees\* to assist in this process.)
- Send highlights of CAPER; PR51; focus on veterans/seniors served; jobs created
- Invite them to CD Week events; ground-breakings; ribbon-cuttings

## Contacts



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