

Hosting a Congressional Site Visit

A guide from

National Association of Workforce Boards and

National Association of Workforce Development Professionals



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
PROFESSIONALS**
CONNECT, ADVANCE, INNOVATE

WHY HOST A SITE VISIT?

How well-versed are your elected officials about workforce development in your community? Do they know about the work you do and its economic impact on your community? Have they heard your success stories? Have they visited a job center, talked to an employer seeking talent, or met one of your clients? If not, it's likely they still have more to learn.



You are already a workforce development expert. You'll soon be an expert in hosting site visits, too!

HOW DO I PLAN A SITE VISIT?

Elected officials make dozens of site visits each year, and they typically welcome the opportunity to learn more about their community.

To plan a site visit, work with your board to decide who to invite, what they will learn, and determine an ideal time for a visit. When you invite them, plan a schedule for what they will experience and do (but be flexible) and provide a one-pager of takeaway information for them to review after the visit.



Consult with your workforce board members. Many of them may have relationships and can informally reinforce your invitation.

USE THIS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PLAN YOUR SITE VISIT

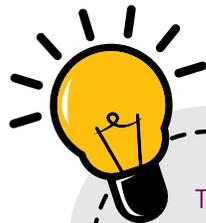
STEP 1: Find your representatives. The U.S. House of Representatives (house.gov) and U.S. Senate (senate.gov). Congressional websites will typically have a “Contact Us” feature, which is specially designed for constituents. We recommend using this feature unless you already have a contact in the office.



Learn about your elected officials by reviewing their websites, reading recent press releases, and following them on social media.

STEP 2: Decide what to showcase. You could invite your member of Congress to visit an American Job Center, sit in on training and education programs, job fair, board meeting, an employer site, roundtable discussion, one-stop location, youth opportunity center, community-based organization, youth detention center, graduation ceremony, or a training center.

For a public event, it is customary to give them a role to play, either by making brief remarks or participating in some other way.



The goal of a site visit is to demonstrate how you serve the community and to build a relationship. Don't feel pressure to show everything you do or to cover too much ground. This first step will allow you to open the door for a return visit.

STEP 3: Send the sample invitation letter below through the Congressional website.

If you have contact information from previous interactions, also send a copy to your contacts; they may forward the message to the scheduler for you.

Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL],

My name is [NAME] and I am the [TITLE] for [NAME OF WORKFORCE BOARD] which works with economic development stakeholders to meet the needs of job seekers, career-seekers, and businesses in our community. I write today to invite you and your staff to visit the [NAME OF ORG/SITE] to learn more about our local workforce development system.

The ideal day and time for a site visit is [OFFER A FEW OPTIONS] however, we are happy to work with your staff to identify a time that would work best for your schedule.

[ADD SOME PERSONALIZATION: Describe what a site visit would entail or describe a unique program or project in which you are involved. Perhaps describe the underserved populations you assist, or your placement/retention results. You could also describe how you serve local employers. Any (or all) of this information is useful background to share.]

We welcome the opportunity to show you and your staff how we serve both jobseekers and employers in our community. Please contact me at [EMAIL/PHONE] to arrange a convenient time.

Sincerely,

Name

STEP 4: Follow up with the office about one week later to ensure the invitation was received. Calling your local office is a good way to follow up. See Step 1 to find this information. You will likely be working with the Scheduler to arrange the site visit.



Be flexible. If a staff member offers to visit in lieu of the elected official, take advantage of this opportunity. Following a successful visit, they may recommend that the elected official visit and/or attend an event.



You may need to follow up several times – don't be discouraged! Congressional offices get hundreds of requests, but yours is just as important as any other.

STEP 5: Prepare for the site visit. What is the main message you want to convey? You may want to discuss your funding sources, your community partners, and some of the challenges and opportunities your community is currently facing.

Email or call the day before the visit to confirm the details of when and where you will meet and who will be participating.



Be prepared to answer questions, but it is perfectly fine to not know an answer. This is a great opportunity to follow up with the information requested.



Be patient if there is a delay.
Be flexible if the schedule changes.

STEP 6: Host the visit. Share an agenda with your guests. Begin and end the meeting by thanking them for taking the time to join you. Share information about how federal policy affects your work – this will be of great interest to elected officials. Take photos. Discuss ways to continue building the relationship. Treat staff with great respect as they act as the eyes and ears for the elected official.

STEP 7: Follow up.

- Send an email (or handwritten note) to thank your guests for the meeting, including all the people who helped arrange it. Include electronic copies of all materials.
- Follow up on any items discussed.
- Share information about the visit on social media, tagging your elected officials.
- Consider asking your elected official (or their staff) to attend or speak at an event, provide a letter of congratulations, or otherwise participate in your work.
- Send NAWB a photo and caption about your site visitor tag us on social media. We would love to amplify the message.



Be sure to get permission to take and share photos. Encourage the official to share photos in their newsletters and on social media, and share on yours!



Tag NAWB on Twitter/X (@WorkforceInvest), Instagram (@workforceboards), and LinkedIn. Use popular hashtags like #workforcedevelopmentmatters #WorkforceWednesday, and #NAWB

MORE TIPS

- Don't assume your visitors are experts. They may not know what a Workforce Development Board is, and they may or may not be familiar with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). That's okay, this is your chance to educate them! Create a one-pager with key information about your funding and outcomes.
- Consider the questions you may be asked, and how you would answer them.
 - What area do you serve?
 - What services do you provide?
 - How do you identify and support an individual job seeker?
 - How do you identify and partner with local employers?
 - What role does WIOA play in your community?
 - What is one thing that would improve your operations and/or allow you to better serve your community?
- Keep it simple. You don't need to host a reception or make everything perfect. On the contrary, don't be afraid to show the challenges you face – perhaps your elected official can help address these issues. Invite your board members and supportive local elected officials to join you for this meeting.
- Share a success story. It is important that policymakers learn of success stories (and be aware that they may repeat the story in the future).

YOU ARE NOW READY TO ARRANGE A SITE VISIT WITH A MEMBER OF CONGRESS!

You can do it, and we are here to help. We look forward to hearing from you with any questions, tips, or examples of your site visits.

Contact Gail Silberglied, NAWB's Senior Director, Government Relations and Advocacy (silbergliedg@nawb.org) with any questions along the way.

You can also visit the Policy and Advocacy section on nawb.org for current information on the FY25 appropriations process and news about WIOA reauthorization.

An example site visit from Pikes Peak Workforce Center, courtesy of Lisanne McNew, Board Chair, NAWB and Past Chair, Pikes Peak Workforce Center (PPWFC)

Imagine the feeling of receiving a letter indicating that your position is being eliminated and you are being laid off. At Pikes Peak Workforce Center, we begin a site visit by issuing a simulated layoff letter.

“To: Employee # 479852.

As you may be aware, there have been numerous fluctuations in the global and domestic financial markets. Accordingly, contracts have dropped 40% in the last six months, and we do not expect our contract volume to return to previous levels in the foreseeable future. Due to this significant loss in business revenue, we hereby inform you that we are eliminating your Division, the Research and Development Department.

You must clock out immediately upon receipt of this letter. An official representative of our Human Resources Department will stop by your workstation shortly to oversee as you gather your personal effects, and they will perform the mandatory exit process before your departure.”

Under the direction of President & CEO Traci Marques, we invite visitors to take a closer look at the PPWFC through our Immersion program. Site visitors to PPWFC have an experience that hundreds of our visitors each week have just gone through. Over two hours, we share resources about workshop offerings; technical training; career development tools; supportive services; funds for advanced training; skills and behavioral assessments used with

adults, young people, veterans, and other targeted populations; and much more.

We also offer a wide range of services to our business customers, including—but not limited to—labor market information; resources for effectively hiring, training, and retaining quality employees; large-scale job fairs; customized screening and hiring events; meeting space; tax credits; funds awarded through federal training grants; and referrals to other community agencies and economic development partners. While this is not feasible for every workforce board, we find it successful. Previous participants in this unique program have expressed that they were better able to empathize with the challenges our customers face while discovering numerous resources our center offers to both our jobseeker and business customers.



Send us your site visit examples and let us know if we can include them in a future edition of this guide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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