



National
Humanities
Alliance

The Anatomy of a Meeting

Sample Scripts

Below, we offer two sample scripts to support advocates in navigating two different meetings. The two scripts showcase:

- 1) How meetings with appropriators (or their staffers) differ from meetings with Members of Congress who are not appropriators;*
- 2) Different approaches to introducing multiple policy priorities; and*
- 3) Various resources you might draw on in making the case.*

We break each meeting into four parts, based on “The Conversation” framework in our Advocacy Guide (see page 7).

Please note: These scripts are designed to give a general sense of how meetings progress, some of the arguments you might make on behalf of humanities funding, and how to pivot to an “ask.” There is no need to stick to this script—and the best meetings generally involve an organic, casual-feeling conversation. After the first meeting or two, they will start to feel more natural!

Mock Meeting 1

OFFICE:

Member of the Appropriations Committee
from Alabama

ADVOCATE 1:

Professor at the University of Alabama

ADVOCATE 2:

Archivist at the Alabama State Archive

Step One: Thank, Introduce, and Connect

STAFFER: Good morning. I am sorry for the wait. I'm [name].

ADVOCATE 1: No problem. Thank you for meeting with us today. I know it is a busy time.

STAFFER: Yes, it is crazy around here.

ADVOCATE 1: Well, we'll be quick today. My name is [name] and I am a professor of medieval philosophy at the University of Alabama.

ADVOCATE 2: And I am [name] and I am an archivist at the Alabama State Archive.

STAFFER: Oh, I was an undergraduate there. I majored in economics but I took a philosophy class.

ADVOCATE 1: Oh, really? What was it?

STAFFER: Political Philosophy with Professor [name].

ADVOCATE 1: That's terrific. I'll let Professor [name] know that I ran into you. I am sure they'll be pleased.

Mock Meeting 1

Step Two: Make Your Case and Relate it to the Member (Based Upon Your Research)

ADVOCATE 1: I am here today to talk to you about how important the National Endowment for the Humanities is to Alabama. Are you familiar with its work?

STAFFER: Somewhat.

ADVOCATE 1: Just to offer a brief overview, the National Endowment for the Humanities offers competitive grants for research in fields such as history, philosophy, and literature. It also provides funding to museums and historical societies across the country to ensure that we preserve our local cultural heritage. It receives a relatively small amount of federal funding—the FY 23 omnibus appropriation bill included \$207 million for the NEH. Here is a quick briefing sheet. You can find their write-up on NEHforAll.org. I would be happy to share the link with you after the meeting.



I'll offer one quick example. A recent grant to Auburn University will help build out courses that integrate German language and engineering, helping students obtain high levels of linguistic, intercultural, and technical expertise. It really showcases how the NEH plays a key role in supporting students and preparing them for 21st century careers.

ADVOCATE 2: I'll just jump in with one more example. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute has a great program that the NEH supported to train local high school students to become docents and help tell the story of Civil Rights in Alabama. The National Humanities Alliance featured their work as an example of an exemplary NEH program. I am going to drop their write-up in the chat. [<https://nehforall.org/projects/developing-young-leaders-through-civil-rights-history?filter=alabama>]

STAFFER: I'll stop you there. These sound like excellent programs, but I'm not sure an increase in appropriations for the NEH is a top priority this year.

Mock Meeting 1

ADVOCATE 1: I understand your concern, but I would note that the cultural sector was hit particularly hard by the pandemic and an increase in the NEH's appropriations will continue to help the sector rebuild.

STAFFER: That's interesting.

ADVOCATE 2: We also want to talk briefly about the National Archives, which have unfortunately been underfunded over the past several years. This has come at a challenging time—the federal government's transition to electronic records, including email, has dramatically increased the number and complexity of records NARA needs to manage, process, and catalog.

ADVOCATE 1: And NARA not only holds our founding documents, American citizens rely on access to immigration, naturalization, and census records held by the National Archives to provide proof of citizenship and conduct genealogical research—so it's essential that it receives the funding it needs.

STAFFER: Yes, we understand the difficult situation the National Archives finds itself in, and I will make sure to bring this to the attention of my boss.

Step Three: State Your Request

ADVOCATE 2: We've been so pleased to see the Senator's consistent support for the NEH on the Appropriations Committee and we appreciate the increases over the past several years. And we were also very happy to see a robust increase for the National Archives in the FY 23 appropriations bill. We hope that the Senator will again support a robust increase for the NEH and the National Archives in the coming year.

STAFFER: Yes, I know that the Senator is very supportive of both issues, but we are just starting to turn our attention to FY 2024. Do you have specific asks?

Mock Meeting 1

ADVOCATE 1: The humanities community is still solidifying its asks for FY 2024. Can we circle back in a few weeks?

STAFFER: Sure, no problem.

ADVOCATE 1: One more request: We noticed that the Senator is not yet a member of the bipartisan Senate Cultural Caucus. This membership requires no commitment to specific funding levels—it's just a sign of general support for the arts and humanities. It's co-chaired by Senator Collins and Senator Reed. Would the Senator be interested in joining?

STAFFER: I can definitely touch base with them to see if they might want to join.

NOTE:
This might change before Humanities Advocacy Day. We will update you if it does!

Step Four: Offer Future Resources

ADVOCATE 1: Thanks, I'd really appreciate that. Can I follow up with further information about the Senate Cultural Caucus?

STAFFER: Yes, that'd be great. Here is my business card which has my email.

ADVOCATE 2: We will also plan on following up with the humanities community's ask in the coming weeks. I'll also say that we'd be delighted to host you and/or the Senator at the state archive in the coming month.

STAFFER: That does sound great. You can always reach out to our district director to invite the Senator to come by.

ADVOCATE 2: Good to know.

ADVOCATE 1: Well, thanks for this productive meeting. We'll be in touch!

Mock Meeting 2

OFFICE:
Republican Representative from Indiana

ADVOCATE 1:
Professor at Indiana University

ADVOCATE 2:
Museum professional at the Children's
Museum of Indianapolis

Step One: Thank, Introduce, and Connect

STAFFER: Good morning. I'm [name].

ADVOCATE 1: Thanks for meeting with me. My name is [name] and I am a professor of history at IU Bloomington.

ADVOCATE 2: And I am [name] and I am an educational programs manager at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

STAFFER: Oh wow, I used to love going to the museum as a kid! I even got to spend the night in the museum with my Girl Scout troop.

ADVOCATE 2: It's always wonderful to hear when folks remember the museum fondly.

STAFFER: I'll have to visit the next time I'm in town. Anyway, so sorry for the tangent. How can I help you today?

Mock Meeting 2

Step Two: Make Your Case and Relate it to the Member (Based Upon Your Research)

ADVOCATE 1: We are here to speak about the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Department of Education’s international education programs, also known as Title VI and Fulbright-Hays. Are you familiar with these programs?

STAFFER: Oh, someone was just here talking about the NEH?

ADVOCATE 1: Yes! I believe Indiana Humanities was here last week. That’s the state humanities council, and they support wonderful programs that reach people all over the state. Well, as you might know, the state councils are funded in part from an annual grant from the NEH, but the NEH also administers grants for several national programs for professional development for teachers, cutting edge research, and the preservation of our cultural heritage across the country.

STAFFER: We receive notification of these grants. There are a lot of them.

ADVOCATE 2: Yes, I’ll give you one example from your district. The Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library has received a series of small grants to help them preserve their collection and develop a new museum exhibition on *Slaughterhouse-Five*. During the pandemic, NEH grants allowed the organization to rehire staff members who were laid off at the beginning of the pandemic when the museum closed and funded the creation of virtual tours and public programming about freedom of expression, civic engagement, and the historical context and literary merit of Kurt Vonnegut’s work.



STAFFER: I am glad to hear about money going to the district and I imagine my boss will be interested as well. I know the pandemic has been hard for many museums.

ADVOCATE 2: It has definitely being a challenging time. You can find a wealth of information about the NEH and other grants that went to your state and, potentially, your district on the website NEHforAll.org—I’ll drop the link in the chat. You can search grants by state and even find a map that captures all the local newspapers that have been digitized through the Chronicling America Project. [Advocate 1], do you want to jump in?

Mock Meeting 2

ADVOCATE 1: Yes, thank you. I'd like to talk briefly about the Department of Education's Title VI funding, which is essential to Indiana University and students across the state. IU actually has 6 on-campus centers that receive prestigious Title VI funding to teach about world regions, including the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Center for the Study of the Middle East, and the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center. These centers ensure that we can train students to enter positions in business, diplomacy, or global health with deep knowledge of world regions.

STAFFER: I studied Middle Eastern history as an undergrad and it's definitely helped me with my work on the Hill.

ADVOCATE 1: I am so glad to hear it's been beneficial.

NOTE:
Member profiles contain information about the number of Title VI centers in your state.

Step Three: State Your Request

ADVOCATE 1: So, normally at this time of year we would be asking you to sign on to Dear Colleague Letters supporting a specific increase for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays and the NEH. Given the delay in the President's Budget Request, those aren't circulating quite yet so we will have to circle back. However, we were pleased to see increases for all of these programs in the FY 23 spending bill, but there's still a lot of work to be done. The NEH received \$207 million in the FY 23 omnibus spending bill, and Title VI and Fulbright-Hays combined only received \$85.7 million.

STAFFER: Oh, that's not a lot. It's a rounding error.

ADVOCATE 2: That's true. Do you think your boss will be willing to sign the letters?

STAFFER: It's possible, but they are very careful about which appropriations letters they sign on to.

Mock Meeting 2

ADVOCATE 2: I understand, but I hope they will. The letter garners bipartisan support. My second question is whether they might be interested in joining the Congressional Humanities Caucus? I did notice that they are a member of the Arts Caucus.

STAFFER: Oh, possibly.

ADVOCATE 2: The caucus organizes outings for staffers to visit cultural sites in D.C. And if your boss joined, it'd be a great way to show support.

STAFFER: Great. I'll ask.

Step Four: Offer Future Resources

ADVOCATE 2: OK, I'll follow up with this information via email. Would you mind sharing your email?

STAFFER: Sure, here's my card.

ADVOCATE 2: Finally, do you think your boss might be interested in coming to the opening of the new museum on campus?

STAFFER: Possibly. I'd follow up with the district office.

ADVOCATE 2: Will do.

ADVOCATE 1: Thanks so much for your time!