



Youth
Changing
the World



Engaging Public Officials



Leveraging Public
Officials for Support
& Policy Advocacy

Engaging Public Officials

Leveraging Public Officials for Support and Policy Advocacy

1. Why Engage Public Officials?
 - Impact on Youth Volunteers
 - Impact on the Community
2. Why is Policy Advocacy so Important?
 - Benefits of Policy Advocacy
3. Methods of Policy Advocacy
 - The IPARD/C Process for Engaging Public Officials
4. Additional Resources and Worksheets
5. Types of Public Officials
6. GYSD Roles for Public Officials
7. Preparing to talk with Public Officials
8. Public Officials Outreach Tracker

Why Engage Public Officials?

Public officials can be advocates for young people playing a role in solving real problems and creating healthy communities. They can advocate on an organization's behalf, provide a higher level of media attention, and help to spread the word about a project.

Impact on Youth Volunteers

Young people can participate and gain experience by:

- Researching government officials allows young people to learn about various levels of government and the political process;
- Contacting public officials practicing formal communication skills and developing professional relationships with other community leaders;
- Developing a presentation for the public officials can improve public speaking and help young people learn how to advocate for solutions through participation in public dialogue and working to shape public policy; and
- Engaging public officials in a long-term strategy allows young people to learn the long term impact of collaboration between the government and individuals or groups.

Impact on the Community

As your organization works with public officials, you'll have greater impact on the community you both serve. Cultivating champions for service and service-learning is essential for its success in the community, especially among government officials and other policy-makers. By pooling resources and utilizing each other's expertise and networks, you will be able to:

- Gain media attention, greater public awareness, and heightened long-term government support for your organization and program;
- Foster opportunities to be civically engaged year-round;
- Bring together federal/state funding for quality service projects, service initiatives, and community organizations;
- Better address real community needs; and
- Build a community where everyone has a voice, regardless of age or background.



National Child Awareness Month
Ambassador meets Senator Elizabeth
Warren

Photo Credit: Andrés Miguel Harris

Methods of Policy Advocacy

The IPARDC process is a national service learning model that can be used when planning service learning projects. The 6 steps of the IPARDC process are as follows: Investigate a problem, Plan a project, Act to address a problem, Reflect on your experiences and the process, Demonstrate your work to a wider audience, and celebrate successes. Each of these steps has been broken down below to demonstrate how this process can be used to effectively engage public officials.

Investigation

- Create a list of skills and interests needed to perform outreach to public officials and compare those skills and interests with your own.
 - Define your purpose for contacting public officials.
 - Why are you contacting public officials?
- Do you want them to help to learn more about an issue or a community need or resource?
- Do you want to inform public officials about your position on the issue?
- Do you want to work with public officials to address an issue?
- Do you want to receive public recognition for your GYSD efforts?
- Research different offices and roles to identify opportunities for collaboration.
 - Find out the official's position on your issue and look for common interests. What actions has the public official taken, if any, to address the issue? Is the issue that your project addresses one that is a priority or concern for him/her as well? Public officials will be most interested in your project if you are dealing with an issue that is also one of their own priorities.

Preparation and Planning

- Identify your communications leader for reaching out to public officials.
 - This person will oversee all outreach to and communication with public officials.
- Brainstorm roles for public officials, and select multiple ways they could be involved in your project.
 - Create specific goals for public official involvement.
 - Do you want your mayor to issue a GYSD proclamation?
 - Do you want two public officials to speak and present awards at your GYSD project?
- Develop a public official outreach strategy that includes suggested roles for them, means of contacting officials, and timeline for contacting public officials.
 - Identify the appropriate staff member at each office. This is usually the scheduler if you would like to invite them to events. Constituent Services Directors and Community Outreach staffers at congressional district offices are others you may contact. Be sure to investigate any connections within your network that can make an introduction on your behalf to their office!
 - Cultivate a relationship with the public officials and their staff.
- Staff members are not only more accessible than the officials themselves, but they also are focused on doing issue research. They are interested in learning about ways that the elected official can be responsive to constituents, and can become key allies especially in an area of critical interest.

- Write your invitation or call script.
 - Refer to the tips and sample scripts and invitations included in this document. Prepare to speak to public officials and their staff. Develop talking points on your issue, your project, Global Youth Service Day, and all of your sponsors and partners so that you are prepared for your phone call, meeting or presentation. Refer to *Preparing to Speak to Public Officials* included in this document.
 - Submit your invitation or request to selected public officials.
 - Start outreach early. As soon as you know the specific details about your project, such as date/time/location, start contacting public officials. Their schedules fill up very quickly. Choose how you want to contact them, especially if you are inviting Members of Congress, as regular mail goes through extensive security checks and takes much longer to reach them. If you prefer to send a letter by mail, send it to the District or State office for them to forward to their Washington office.
 - Follow up after you submit your request.
 - A few days after you make your request, follow-up via phone or email to make sure they received your correspondence and see if they have any questions.
 - Encourage the office to let you know whether or not the official can participate by a specific date.
 - Continue to follow up until they confirm whether they can or cannot participate.
 - If the official cannot participate, ask if a member of the staff would be able to participate.
 - Confirm logistical information.
 - Send staff members the address, directions, parking information and start time. It is also helpful to have your designated public official outreach lead onsite to answer questions and help your public official find their place.
 - If public officials choose to present or speak at your project, provide them with talking points and a timeframe for their presentation. Let them know if other community leaders will be in attendance as the official may want to recognize them in their remarks.
 - Include information about the participation of any public officials in all project media releases.
- **Action**
 - Interact with public officials throughout the project.
 - Greet public officials when they arrive at your project or event site.
 - With their permission, videotape and photograph their participation.
 - Invite public officials to have a follow-up meeting with you after the event.
 - Make sure to thank public officials for their involvement and support.

- **Reflection**

- Reflect on the following questions most related to you:
 - How can public officials help you gather information and learn about issues and community needs and resources?
 - How do public officials view youth? How do they reach out to youth?
 - What careers and/or jobs did you learn about while working on these outreach efforts? What skills are needed to become a public servant? What training and education would adequately prepare you to become a public servant?
 - What skills have you gained through your outreach to public officials?
 - How has your involvement in government outreach shaped or affirmed your future plans as a citizen or worker?
 - What information would you like to share with public officials about your service project?
 - How can you work with public officials to raise awareness about your cause or project?
 - How can a public official's support help you increase the sustainability and long-term impact of your project?
 - What aspect of your government outreach efforts are you most proud of?

- Reflect using the following government-related formats:
 - Two Voices Exercise: Find public officials who have diverse perspectives on your project issue. Research their positions and the actions they have taken to address this issue. Ask your peers: Which position is most convincing to you? Why? How might the public officials most effectively justify their position? What further questions would you ask of these public officials if they were here with us? Which voice(s) are missing? What points are left out in their positions?
 - Host a mock debate to talk about different ways your community could address your identified community need.
 - Host and facilitate a community forum to learn about diverse perspectives on community needs.

Demonstration/Celebration

In order to maintain and enhance relationships with public officials, follow up with them after your GYSD project.

- Thank public officials for their involvement.
- Send them a thank you note that includes pictures, final headcounts, media hits, reports, and other information to highlight the success of your event.
- Publicly thank public officials by posting a statement on your website/social media or in your group's newsletter.

- Provide public officials with specific ways they can support or stay involved with your project.

One great example of a Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) Lead Agency engaging public officials comes from HandsOn Frederick County, where they engaged public officials throughout their project:

“We reached out to all levels of our local, city and state government through an official BIG Sweep Celebration invitation. During the BIG Sweep Celebration and Kick-Off Breakfast, Frederick City Mayor Randy McClelland presented a proclamation from the City. Brunswick Mayor Carroll Jones helped recognize all of the BIG Sweep volunteers. Frederick County Commissioners presented Volunteer Frederick with a County Proclamation in the week prior to the BIG Sweep, and four of the Commissioners, Blaine Young, David Gray, Kai Hagen and President of the County Commissioners Jan Gardner all attended the Kick-Off Breakfast and helped recognize all of the hard work of the volunteers. Jan Gardner helped distribute the prizes to the 3 highest fundraising teams.”

-- HandsOn Frederick County, BIG Sweep organizer, YSA Lead Agency

Types of Public Officials

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 500,000 elected officials in the United States. (That’s nearly 1 out of every 600 Americans.)¹

Out of 511,039 elected officials in the United States:		
Local	State	Federal
491,669	18,828	542
96.2% of Total	3.6% of Total	.2% of Total

Examples of public officials at the local, state, and national level:

National	State	Local (City, County, School District)
President and First Lady of the United States	Governor	Mayor
Vice President and Second Lady of the United States	Lt. Governor	City Council/County Board
	Secretary of State	City/County Manager
	Attorney General	Police Chief/County Sheriff
	State Cabinet Officers & Agency Officials (eg.	Fire Chief

¹ http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gov/gc/gc92_1_2/pdf

Federal Departments & Agencies – Secretaries, Undersecretaries, Staff	Commissioner / Secretary of Education or State Superintendent)	City/County Clerk County Executive County Attorney or Judges Township Officials School Superintendent School Board Members Agency officials/directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Housing • Department of Parks and Recreation
Federal Judges	State Senators	
Members of Congress - U.S. Senators - U.S. Representatives	State Representatives / Delegates Supreme Court Justices	

Who should you contact? (Use the Public Officials Outreach Tracker below to organize your information)

Even though it is important for all public officials (local, state, and national) who have jurisdiction over where you live and volunteer to at least be aware of the GYSD activities you have planned, we encourage you to focus your public officials outreach to local officials. In each office, there will be staff members assigned to each aspect of the public official’s work.

- For invitations to events, contact the scheduler.
- For media or press releases, speak with the press secretary or anyone in the communications team.
- For awards, proclamations, and other forms of recognition, find the ceremonial services or constituent services staff. They will most likely be able to help you or direct you to the right person.

Roles for Public Officials

Public officials can participate in GYSD in many ways. By providing multiple options at each level of participation, you will maximize your chances of having a public official support your project.

Public officials can learn about your project by:

- Tour the project site or facility.
- Participate in a roundtable discussion with volunteers and recipients of service.
- Schedule a meeting between you and his/her staff. The meeting should be attended by a diverse representation of your project: youth volunteer, adult volunteer, recipient of service, partner site staff.
- Look up different examples of service projects similar to yours that have been done in the past.
- Talk to officials that are professionals in the cause that your project is about.

They can participate in your project by:

- Lead by example and become a project volunteer.
- Address volunteers at a kick-off rally or closing celebration.
- Hand out certificates to volunteers who participated in the project.
- Get other public officials to get involved with your project.
- Become an honorary project lead to further help your cause.

They can recognize and promote youth service by:

- Issue a proclamation for Global Youth Service Day in their jurisdictions.
- Host a recognition ceremony at City Hall or the State Capitol for participants after GYSD and present awards, letters of support or certificates for GYSD volunteers.
- Invite your state's congressional delegation, legislators, mayors and local government officials, judges, and their staff to participate in and/or organize activities related to your GYSD project.
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor of the local newspaper encouraging youth participation in Global Youth Service Day and year-round service.
- Promote service in speeches, public statements, and their electronic communications (i.e. website, newsletter).
- Present a call-to-action for community children and youth to address your community's needs through participation in service.

They can raise awareness about your issue or project:

- Schedule a meeting with you to talk about your project and learn about ways that you can work together to address the community need.
- Invite you and your classmates to attend a hearing – or perhaps to present what you have learned as testimony – on the issue that you have chosen as your project focus.
- Come to your school and share with you and other classes what *they* are doing to address the topic of your service project.
- Create and distribute a media release or a public service announcement highlighting your project issue, your project or other service activities taking place in your city or state. Most elected officials have communications staff and/or press secretaries who can help you with this task. Refer to the *Engaging Media* section of the Toolkit for sample press release.

They can change policy or budgeting priorities:

- Convene or participate in a roundtable or town hall forum to express their views on the subject and how young people can address this issue.
- Assess your community's needs that can be addressed through youth service, and present a service plan to the city council, a session of state legislature, etc.

- Announce the creation of state or local Youth Advisory Councils to address community needs.



4-H Million Trees Project received support from public officials. Congresswoman Jackie Speier, and the Pacifica, CA City Council attended the San Mateo County 4-H County Council's celebration after their Coastside-wide Global Youth Service Day Earth Day events. See video [here](#) to learn about Congresswoman Jackie Speier's participation in GYSD celebration event and her effort to increase funding for environmental stewardship programs.

Tips for Success

When informing public officials of how you would like them to get involved, be sure to make a specific ask.

- Suggest a variety of ways to get involved. Offer a few options right away, or be ready with a follow-up ask if they say no to your first request.
- If their staff tells you that your public official is too busy to attend your event, be prepared to let them know about other ways that he/she can show their support for your efforts.
- Provide all the details they'll need to make a decision. Officials can't make a commitment to attend an event without knowing all the details. Include date, time, location, expected number of people in attendance, type of audience (students, teachers, other leaders, sponsors, etc) and specific activity information.
- Follow up! A quick call to the office to make sure they received your communications will keep your event or cause fresh in the staff's minds and increasing your chances of having your public official's participation.

Terms to Know

Government or elected officials: those who have gone through a public election process, and who are selected by registered voters, for a specific term.

Examples include the President, all Members of Congress, your state legislators, your mayor and city council members.

Agency or appointed officials: those who serve a specific term, but are selected for their position by an elected official to implement policies and assist in running the government. Examples include the President's Cabinet, state or county department heads, or a city manager.

Cities of Service

In 2010, leading mayors across the country launched a bipartisan coalition of large and small city mayors, committed to engaging millions of Americans in a new era of service. To date, mayors from approximately 200 cities across the country have joined the coalition. Each participating mayor agreed to promote service locally by developing "a comprehensive service plan and a coordinated strategy focused on matching volunteers and established community partners to the areas of greatest local need." A number of Cities of Service have hired Chief Service Officers, a senior city official dedicated to developing and implementing a citywide plan to increase volunteerism.

- See <http://www.citiesofservice.org/> or contact your city's mayor's office to see whether it is a member of the Cities of Service coalition, and whether it has a Chief Service Officer.
- If your city is a member of the Cities of Service coalition, review its service plan, to see how your project might help address identified local community needs.
- Share information about your GYSD project, and invite the Cities of Service Officer to help promote your volunteer opportunity.

Preparing to talk with Public Officials

Contacting government officials can be intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. As you come to understand the role of government, you will view yourself as a young constituent – and that government officials are there to serve their constituents. Most officials will welcome the opportunity to support you and other young people who are doing something positive for the community, seeing you as a partner in addressing the same needs that are on the agenda for all community leadership.

Whether you are having a phone conversation or an in-person meeting with public officials, they will ask a variety of questions like the following, so have your talking points ready! Brainstorm your responses and run through a few mock conversations or presentations with your peers prior to the meeting.

- What is Global Youth Service Day?
- Why is your project and this issue important to you?
- Why should I support your project?
- How does this project impact the community and my constituents? Who else in the community supports this issue and your project?
- How do you want me to get involved? *

Samples Scripts and Invitations

When writing your invitation or call script:

- Be courteous and concise.
- In the first paragraph, state your purpose for writing.
- Be sure to thank them if they participated previously.
- Describe your project including the date(s) and times, the number of youth and adults involved, and how it serves the community.
 - Make your project description as colorful and compelling as possible. You really want to try and illustrate your story to convey how important your cause is.
- Specifically state how you would like the public officials to participate, whether as an emcee, speaker, etc.
- Provide multiple ways for them to get involved.
- Provide all the details they'll need to make a decision. Officials can't make a commitment to attend an event without knowing all the details. Include date, time, location, expected number of people in attendance, and specific activity information.
- Include specific timeframe or let them know that you are flexible and able to accommodate their schedule.
- If other officials or media have already agreed to attend your project or activity, include that information in your letter.
- Thank them for considering your invitation.
- Include contact name and phone number they or staff can use for additional information or to ask any questions.

When formatting your invitation:

- Include your name and address with city, state and zip code + 4 digits.
- Keep the letter to one page even if you're sending it by e-mail.

Sample Call Script

Office:

Number:

Scheduler Name:

Hello, may I speak with <Scheduler Name>?

Hi, my name is <Your Name>, and I'd like to set up a meeting with the Senator to discuss a project we're doing for Global Youth Service Day on the weekend of April 17-19 when <he/she> is back in the state. We'd really like for <Elected Official Title> <Name> to participate in our project.

If they are unable to meet to discuss the project:

Would I be able to send you information about the event? We would welcome the <Elected Official Title>'s participation, so if <he/she> were able to attend, we would greatly appreciate it.

Thanks for your time.

Sample Email

Dear <Elected Official Title> <Name>,

I am writing to invite you to participate in our event for Global Youth Service Day on the weekend of April 17-19, 2015.

On <Event Date> from <Event Time>, approximately <Participant Number> youth and adult volunteers will engage in <Project Names> throughout <Project Locations City>. <Include Brief Descriptions of Projects. Example: We will build a bike and walking trail behind the elementary school, removing invasive plants from areas where endangered flowers grow, and replacing the fence at the senior center>.

We would be honored if you would speak at our event about the importance of youth giving back to their communities and participate, as your schedule allows, in the project with us.

If you are not able to attend, there are a number of ways you can support our efforts to better our community. <Elected Official Title> in the past have written op-eds and letters of support.

If you're available or if you have any questions about the events, please do not hesitate to contact me at <Phone Number> or <Email Address>.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

Sample Letter/Fax Sample

<Date>

The Honorable <Elected Official Name>

<Elected Official Address>

<City>, <State> <Zip>

Dear <Elected Official Title> <Name>:

I am pleased to invite you to <Role> at our <GYSD Project Name>, held at <Location> from <Time>, <Date>. <Provide details on the purpose of the project>.

As you may know, youth service is a critical pipeline to academic achievement, workforce readiness, youth leadership, civic engagement, and most important – dedication to and experience with solving problems and improving communities. We look forward to your attendance at the <GYSD Project Name>. For more information, please contact me at <Your Email>, or <Your Phone Number>.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

Sample Proclamation

SAMPLE GOVERNOR PROCLAMATION

[Official State Letterhead]

State of _____, Office of the Governor

WHEREAS, Global Youth Service Day is an annual campaign that celebrates and mobilizes the millions of children and youth who improve their communities each day of the year through community service and service-learning and the State of _____ depends on youth as vital community assets;

WHEREAS, Global Youth Service Day, is the largest service event in the world, the only day of service dedicated solely to youth engagement, and in 2015 is being observed for the 27th consecutive year in all 50 states and for the 16th year globally in more than 100 countries;

WHEREAS, thousands of students in schools and community-based organizations are planning GYSD activities as part of a Semester of Service, an extended service-learning campaign launched on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, in which young people spend the semester addressing a meaningful community need connected to intentional learning goals and/or academic standards over the course of at least 70 hours;

WHEREAS, high quality community service and service-learning programs increase young people's academic engagement and achievement, workforce readiness and 21st century skills, social, emotional, and behavioral skills, and civic knowledge and engagement;

WHEREAS, community service and service-learning provide opportunities for young people to apply their knowledge, idealism, energy, creativity, and unique perspectives to improve their communities by addressing a myriad of critical issues, such as health, childhood obesity, education, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, environment, climate change, violence, and natural disasters;

WHEREAS, Global Youth Service Day provides an opportunity for young children, teenagers, and young adults to position themselves as assets and resources, active citizens and community leaders; and for schools, community organizations, faith-based organizations, government agencies, businesses, and families to engage youth as leaders and problem solvers;

WHEREAS, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act recognizes Global Youth Service Day as a national day of service and calls on the citizens of the United States to participate;

WHEREAS, [Lead Agency] and [Lead Agency] are mobilizing the citizens of [State] to serve their communities on Global Youth Service Day;

WHEREAS, the 27th annual Global Youth Service Day, a program of Youth Service America, with State Farm as the presenting sponsor, takes place on April 17-19, 2015.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, _____, Governor of the State of _____, do hereby proclaim April 17-19, 2015 to be **Global Youth Service Day** in [State] and encourage all citizens of [State] to serve their communities.

Sample Public Official Outreach Tracker

	Official's Name & Office	Requested Role for Official in GYSD	Contact Name, Phone, E-mail	Materials Needed to Contact Official's Office	Person Responsible for Contacting, Date	Response / Follow-Up / Next Steps	Thank You (Date) Letter Sent (Date)
US Senators							
US Representatives							
Other Federal Officials							
Governor, Lt. Governor							
State Senators							
State Representatives							
Other State Officials							
Mayor							
City Council							
City Agency Staff							

County Executives							
County Supervisors / Board							
County Agency Staff							
Superintendent							
School Board Members							
Neighborhood/ Township Officials							

www.YSA.org



YOUTH SERVICE AMERICA

*Youth
Changing
the World*



Like

Youth Service America
on Facebook



Follow

@youthservice on Twitter

Copyright Youth Service America. All rights reserved.