

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance Legislative Breakfast Tool-Kit

Building Relationships with Your State Legislators

Why should you host a legislative breakfast?

- **Strengthen relationships** with your state legislators at the local level.
- **Generate** positive press coverage for your organization and your state legislators.
- **Educate and increase awareness** of key water issues in your service area.
- **Develop** your organization's advocacy skills.
- **Build support for environmental issues** at the State House which will empower the entire water agenda.
- **Reinforce your status as the local expert/leader** in your issue area.

Suggestions for planning your event:

- **Timing.** We suggest hosting your legislative breakfast between January and March if possible. This is the beginning of the legislative session and legislators are more likely to respond to legislative and budget asks during this period. Note that legislative sessions are two years long, so the beginning of the legislative session is in the odd-numbered year; budgets are filed annually. A legislative breakfast held during the even years provides an opportunity to check in on legislation and advocate for budget asks.
- **Schedule early.** Call your state legislator's office a few months in advance to invite them to the event and agree on a date that they are likely to be able to attend your event.
- **Determine your key speakers.** Select board members, staff or volunteers who will be able to speak briefly about the work your organization is doing and what legislative and/or budget priorities are key to your success.
- **Invite others.** Reach out to other organizations that partner with you or are working on similar issues in shared districts. Consider partnering with a local land trust and/or watershed association to host your event and share responsibilities.
- **Reach out to local media.** Invite members of the media to attend your event and provide them with a "press packet" which details some of the most important asks from the event, key speakers and anticipated attendees from the legislature. If media members cannot attend, consider taking your own photos and sharing those with media outlets along with a press statement about the event.
- **Recognize attending legislators.** Be sure to acknowledge all elected officials who attend your event and provide time in the agenda for every official to speak for one or two minutes about the issues that they are working on that is related to your work.
- **Provide handouts.** Make sure to have handouts for all officials and their staff to take with them with information about your asks and any relevant facts and figures. As Mass Rivers to provide you with the latest handouts for statewide priorities for legislation and the budget.
- **Make your asks.** Develop clear, concise asks for your legislators and articulate those early in the event. Be sure to also ask attending legislators for their positions on the issues you care about so they have an opportunity to respond.

- **Thank your elected officials.** Thank all legislative attendees at the close of your event and follow-up with handwritten thank you notes for legislators and/or legislative staff.
- **Invite Mass Rivers.** Please invite Mass Rivers to attend your event! We would welcome the opportunity to learn more about the work your organization is doing and help cultivate relationships between legislators and your organization!

Suggested timeline for planning your event:

- October – November
 - Call your local legislators' offices to determine availability for your legislative breakfast.
- November
 - Determine your program, menu, set-up and logistics for your event.
 - Create any press releases and develop any PR materials as needed.
 - Confirm speakers for your event.
- November – December
 - Send out invitations to other organizations, your members and relevant parties for your event.
- January – March
 - Confirm the logistics with invited elected officials in the weeks leading up to your event.
 - Host your event!
 - Provide a sign-in sheet for attendees including email addresses so you can follow-up with relevant parties as needed.
- After your event:
 - Send hand written thank you notes to legislators and legislative staff who attended the event.
 - Follow-up with legislators and/or legislative staff as needed to check in on the status of your asks.

Have questions or need additional information?

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