

## Tips for Candidate Engagement in 2024

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Election season is a key time for raising awareness of the public policy issues that matter for Wisconsin's communities. Engaging with candidates builds early relationships with policymakers and aligns with a nonpartisan approach to educating decision-makers and influencing policy change. People who volunteer to run for office are providing an important public service, and engagement with them helps to advance community well-being.

**Considerations for Engagement:** While you may have a professional/agency-based interest or expertise to share, this resource is intended to help you connect as an individual constituent. While you may also use these resources to support your organization/agency-based outreach, please be mindful of the following:

- Be aware of your organization's/employer's policies and seek authorization to coordinate any candidate engagement on behalf of your organization/agency.
- If you invite a candidate or elected official to visit with a committee/program/organization/coalition, remember that this engagement should always be nonpartisan and focused on issue education.
- Your organization/meeting is not a place for candidates to seek endorsement/share their literature.
- Extend invitations to all candidates.
- Be cautious about a candidate using photos or quotes from the visit/event. Attaching your organization/employer name to their election materials should be avoided.

### Why Candidate Engagement Matters

- **Early Relationships:** Connecting with candidates helps to influence their priorities.
- **Nonpartisan Advocacy:** Engaging with both incumbents and challengers ensures a balanced approach, fostering understanding across the political spectrum.
- **Amplifying Issues:** Candidates have influence within their communities, and drawing their attention to issues during campaign season elevates public awareness.

### How to Get Involved

- **Reach out to Candidates via their Websites or Email:** Reach out to candidates to share priorities and questions about their commitment on issues you care about.
- **Attend Forums and Events:** Participate in events hosted by candidates and other civic organizations to learn about their platforms and introduce them to important advocacy priorities.
- **Build Long-Term Relationships:** Continuously engage with both incumbents and challengers to establish lasting connections that transcend election cycles. Remember that policymakers need to be generalists on a wide range of issues, and they rely on trusted constituents to provide issue-specific expertise.

### Steps for Effective Engagement

- **Research Candidate Platforms:** Understand the key issues and positions of each candidate to inform your plan for building connections.
- **Schedule a Meeting:** Contact candidates' offices to schedule meetings. Invite them for an on-site visit and help them directly experience an issue, program, or resource.
- **Prepare Your Message:** Be clear about advocacy priorities, your own experiences and stories, and how they align with the candidate's interests and community needs.
- **Follow Up:** Maintain ongoing communication with candidates to reinforce the relationship and keep priorities and your own causes on their radar.
- **Report Back:** After your engagement, share insights and outcomes from your meetings and interactions with the key collaboration groups.

Additional Resources:

- [Dos and Don'ts for 501\(c\)\(3\) Staff - Independent Sector](#)
- [Nonprofits and Elections 2024](#) (Feb 2024 webinar)
- Find your Candidates - Ballotpedia ([State Assembly](#); [State Senate](#))