Talking to Decision-Makers

Helping decision-makers understand why your work matters is imperative to boosting the impact of your environmental health work. Decision-makers are (usually) not scientists. This means it is up to you to translate your science into information that helps them integrate environmental health into policies, standards, and laws they write.

Bring the 3 Hs!

The 3 Hs hit the 3 main questions a decision-maker will ask – What is the topic? Why does it matter? How will it impact their constituents?

HEAD
What is the topic?

HEART
What is the story and why does it matter?

HEALTH
How many people in a district are affected?

HEAD
Give Them Paper
Providing your message on paper helps address different learning styles, and makes sure the details are easily available.

- Email them an outline of your message, presentation, and/or materials before your meeting
- At the meeting, give them a hard copy of your materials
- Keep it to just one piece of paper

Be Up Front About Money & Time
- At the end of the day, decision-makers have to decide between many important topics to fund and support, so providing this information makes their job easier and hence more likely to be considered.
- Talk about the cost, funding sources, and timeline of your proposal
HEART

Make It Personal
Relating a topic to an individual’s life or values helps to elicit emotion, which makes your message more memorable.

- Link your issue to what you know is personally important to them. Google them and review their social media profiles to learn about their values and activities.
- Tell a real story of an individual impacted by your topic

HEALTH

Provide Proof of Community Benefit
Decision-makers must justify their actions to the community they represent. Describing the community benefit makes it easier for them to consider and represent the proposal.

- Describe how the proposal will improve health in their community.
- Provide 2-3 data points at or below 6th grade science comprehension level.

THANK THEM!

A thank you note is more than polite, it is one more opportunity to get your message in front of them, packaged with everything they need to take the next steps.

- Within 1-2 days, email to say thank you and provide a summary of your conversation, resources with more information, and the action steps discussed.