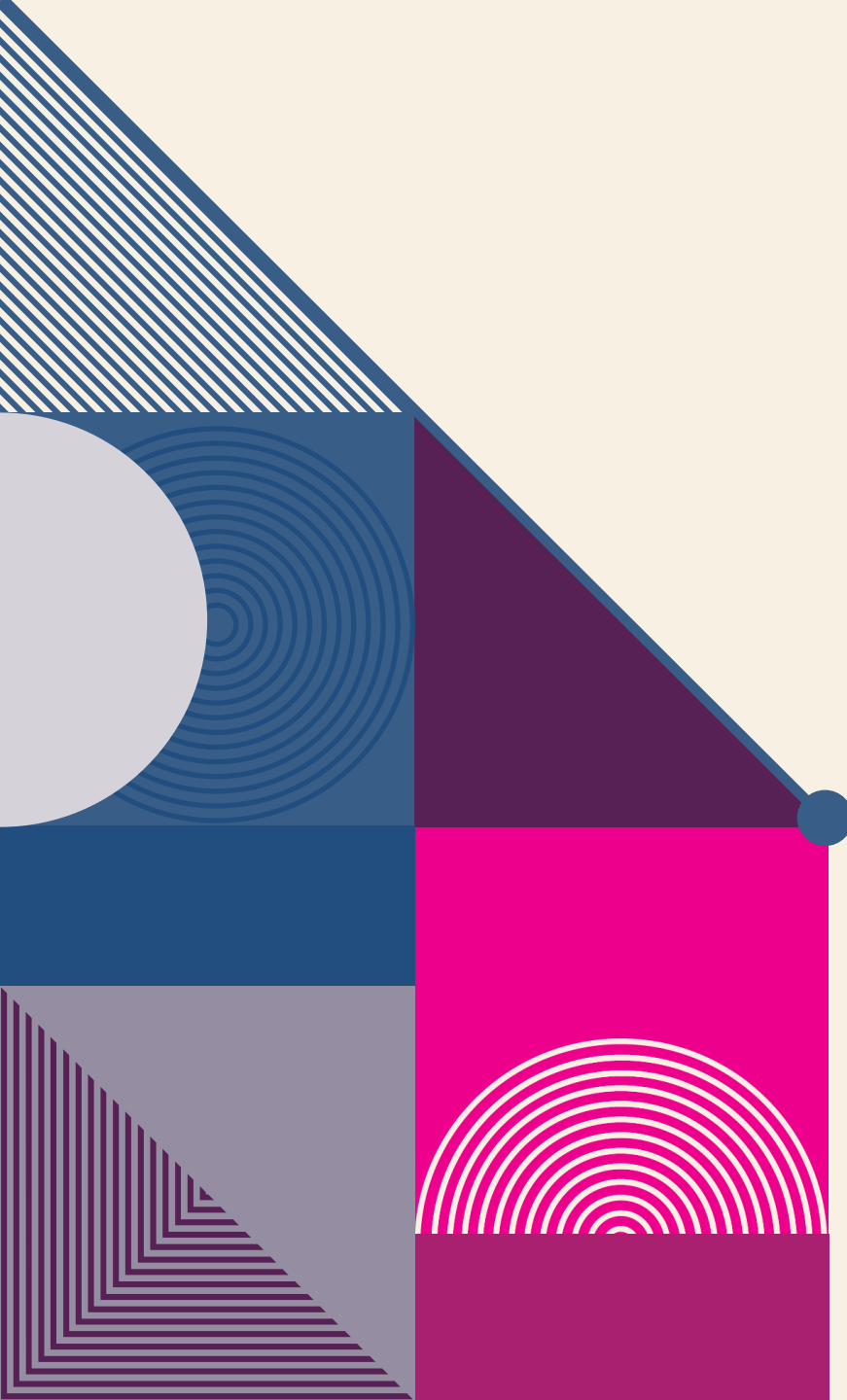




5.06 HOW TO MEET YOUR LAWMAKERS

TUESDAY, JULY 1
3:30-5:30 PM

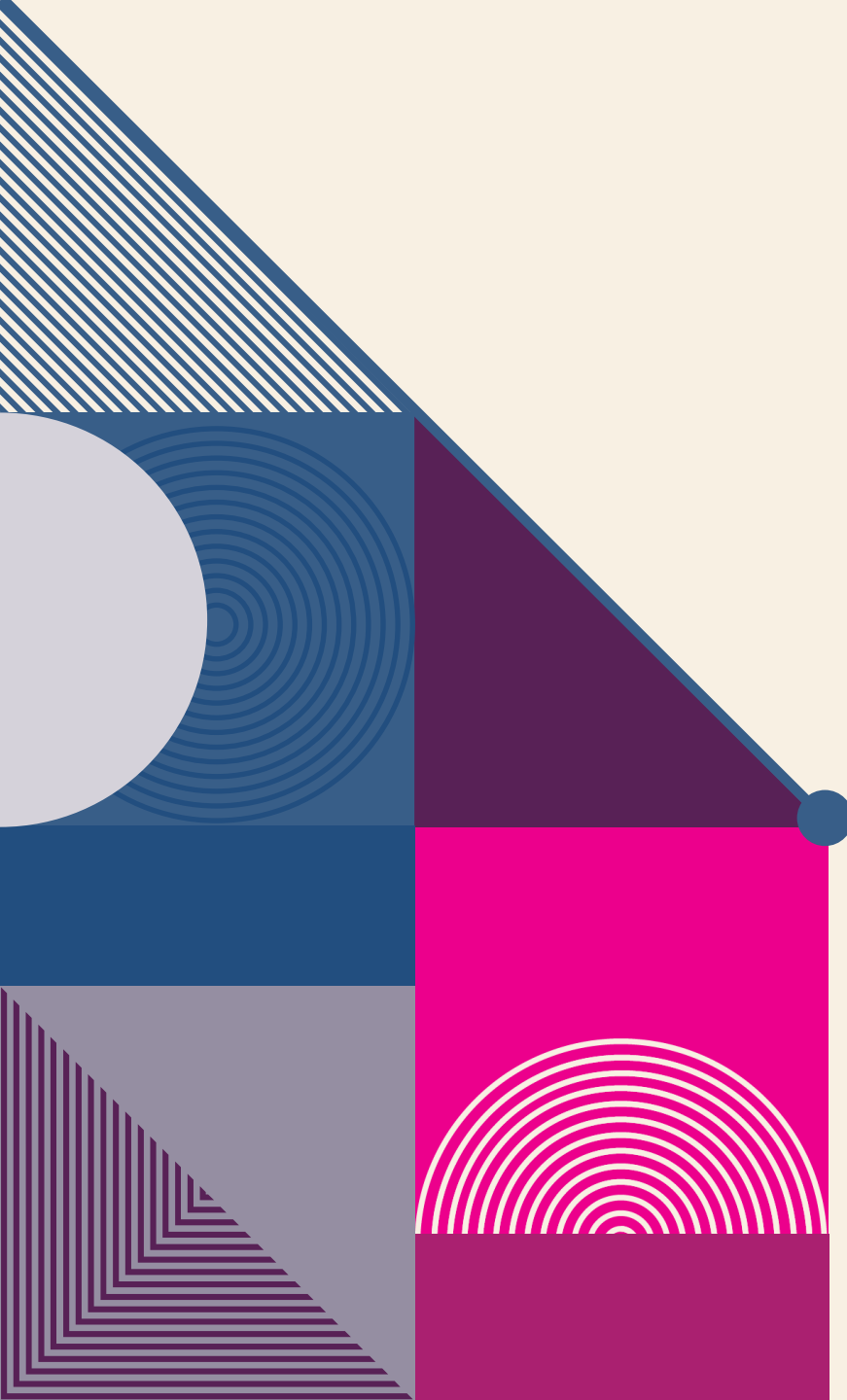


CULLEN RYAN, COMMUNITY HOUSING OF MAINE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOHN THRELKELD, NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END
HOMELESSNESS, LOBBYIST

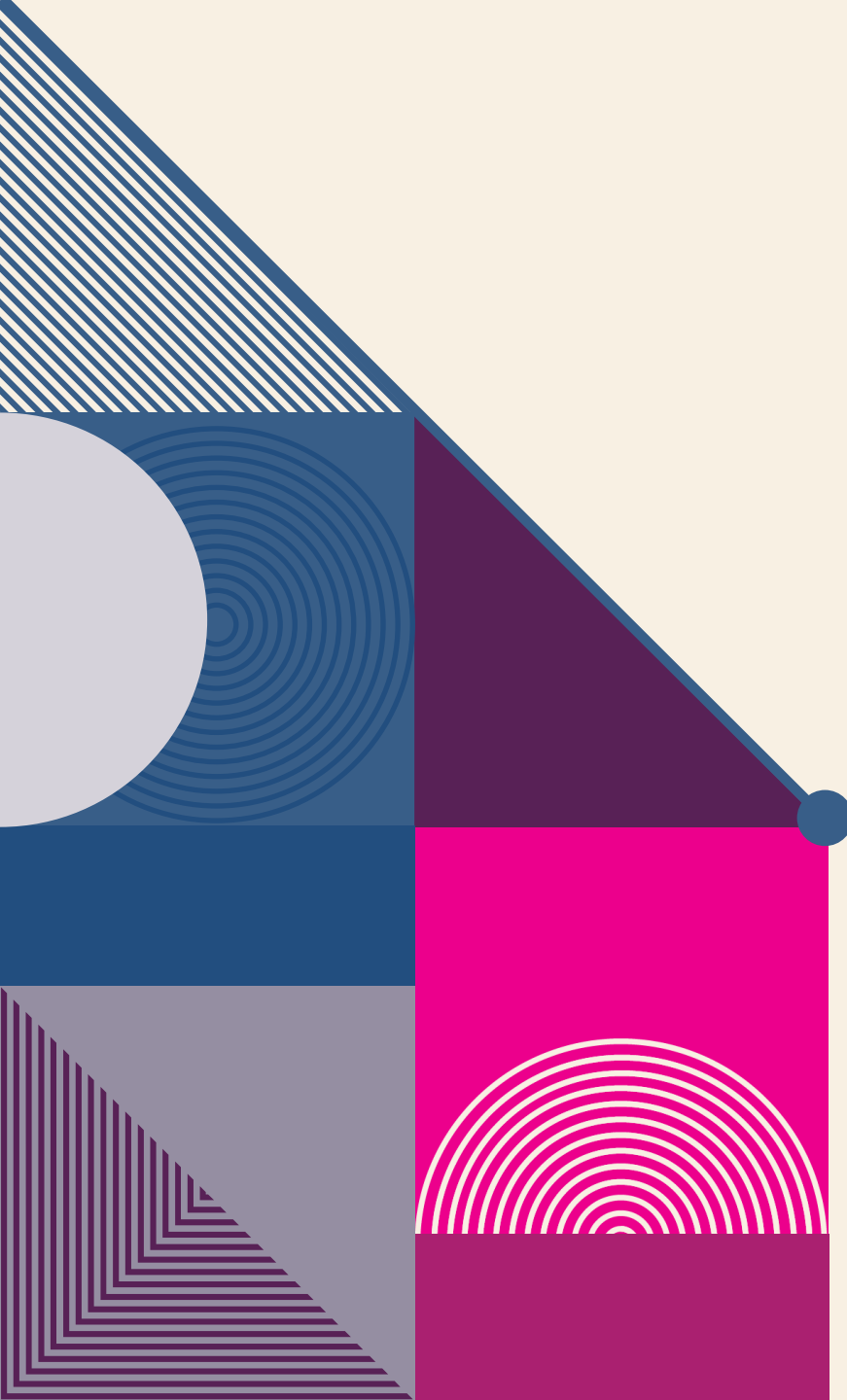
SAMANTHA WOOD, NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END
HOMELESSNESS, SENIOR FIELD ORGANIZER

1. How do Congressional offices work?
2. What can we get out of Congressional offices?
3. How can we cultivate relationships with state/district offices?
4. How can we expand our local coalitions?
5. How can we express disappointment with lawmakers?
6. How can we make requests of lawmakers?
7. Developing lobbying/advocacy skills through role-playing (if time allows)



How Congressional Offices Work

1. Don't turn down a meeting with staff because the lawmaker is busy.
2. DC offices: basic policy--which is done by administrative assistants/chiefs of staff, schedulers, press secretaries, legislative directors, legislative assistants, legislative aides/ correspondents, fellows, detailees, staff assistants, and interns.
3. District/State offices: schedule the boss, provide constituent services, represent the boss at functions in the jurisdiction, and follow local events and media--which is done by case workers, schedulers, district directors, and field representatives.



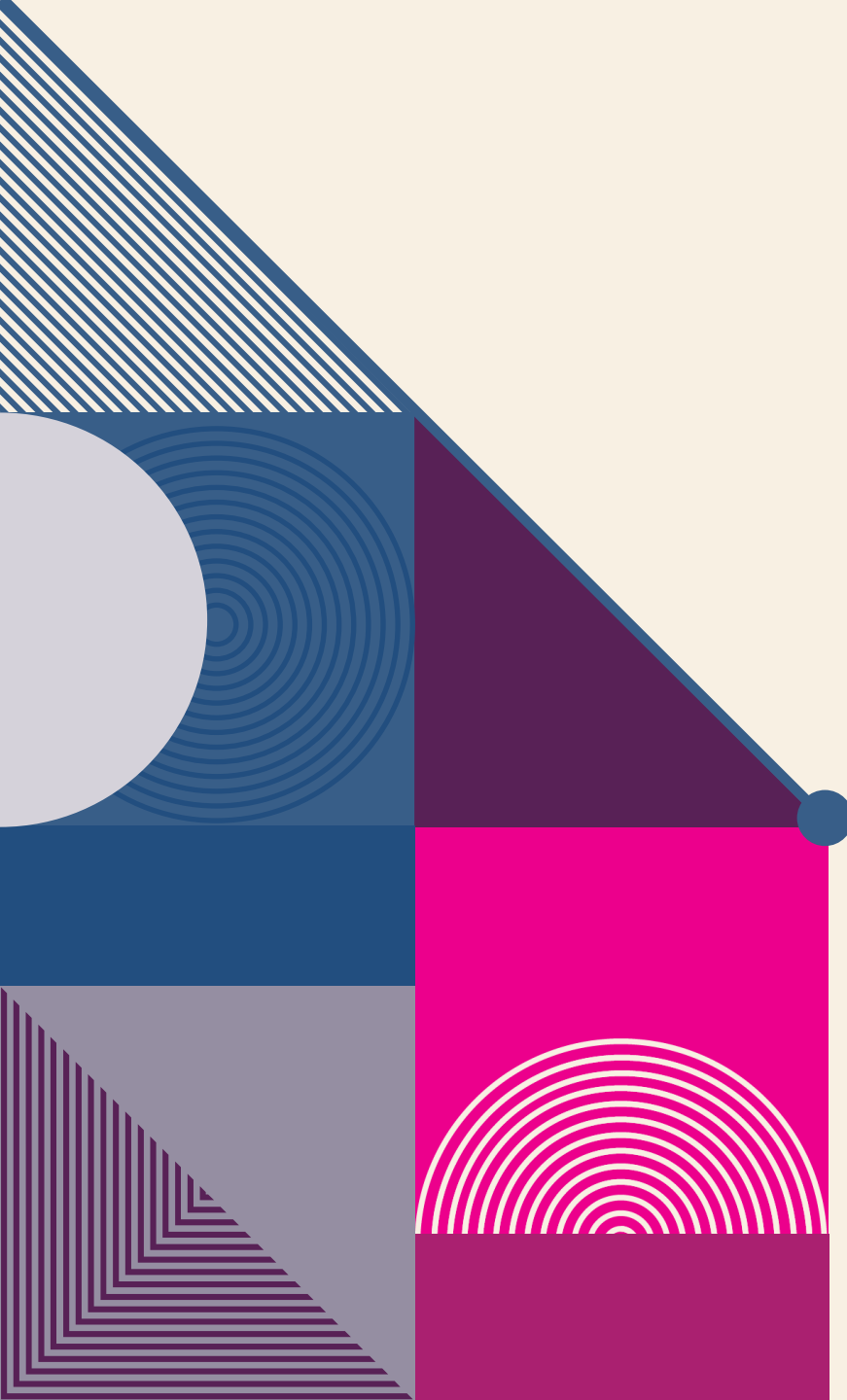
How Congressional Offices Work

4. District/state staff will be more interested in your work in the community than in your policy requests, on which they will likely defer to the DC staff.
5. Perhaps the biggest problem with staff is the constant turnover, particularly in DC offices.
6. Committee / leadership offices.

Note: Always strive to be an honest, accurate resource for Hill staff. Ideally, they'll start calling you for help!



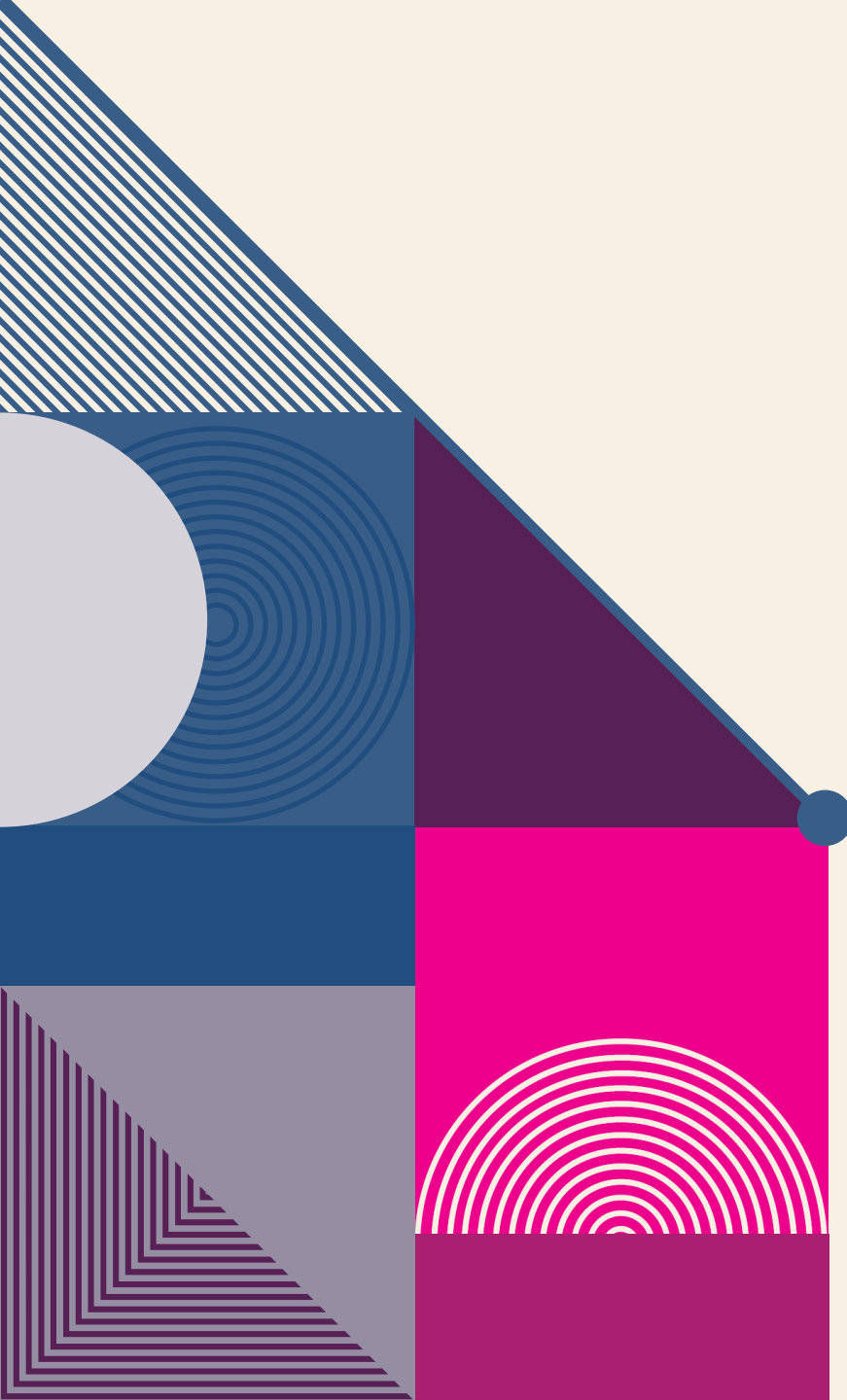
**WHAT CAN YOU REASONABLY
EXPECT FROM YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH A
CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE?**



What can we reasonably expect out of a Congressional Office?

Policy Matters

- Votes
- Introduce Legislation
- Cosponsor Legislation
- Join Sign-On Letters
- Accept (And, Hopefully, Act On) Appropriations Portal Submissions
- Engage In Private Conversations and Correspondence On Our Behalf



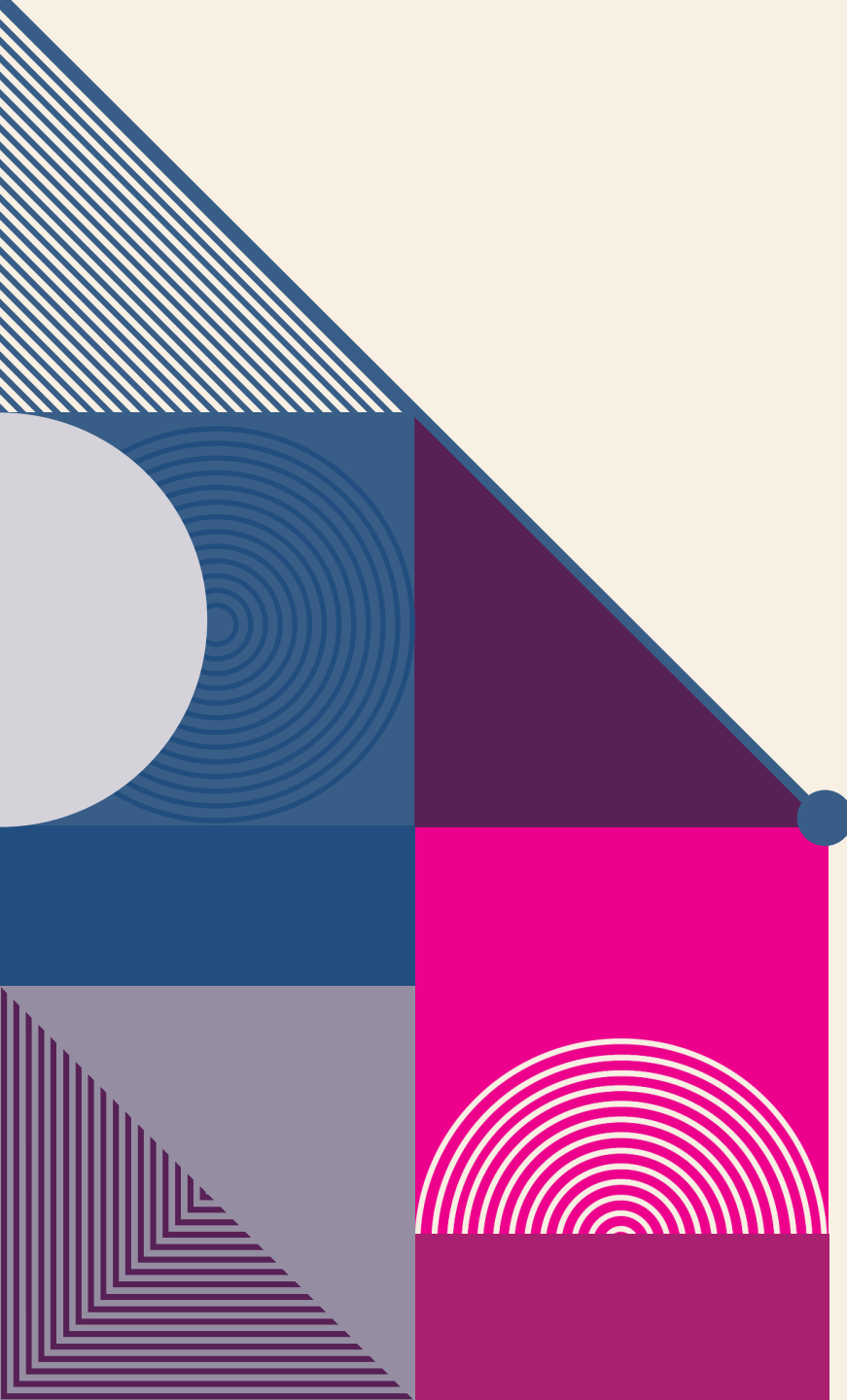
What can we reasonably expect out of a Congressional Office?

Constituent Services

- Help With Federal Agencies
- Earmarks
- Help Back Home In The Community
- Help With Publicity And Perhaps Fundraising

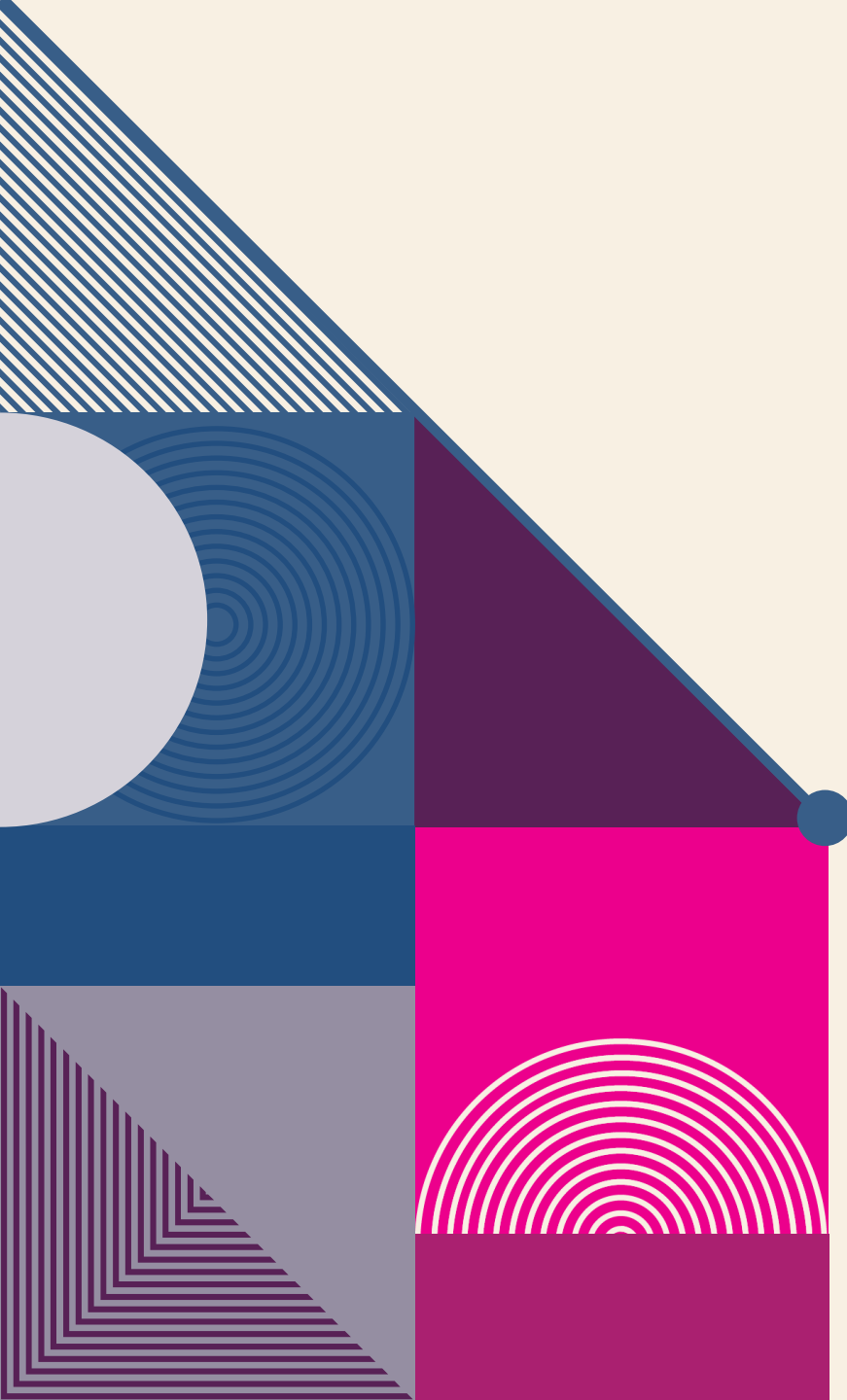


**WHAT DETERMINES WHAT WE
CAN GET OUT OF A
CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE?**



What determines what we can get out of a Congressional Office?

1. their level of support (or their party's level of support) for our work,
2. whether their party controls the executive branch,
3. whether they are in leadership,
4. which committees they serve on, and
5. our ability to develop and nurture a relationship.



What can we reasonably expect out of a Congressional Office?

Policy Matters

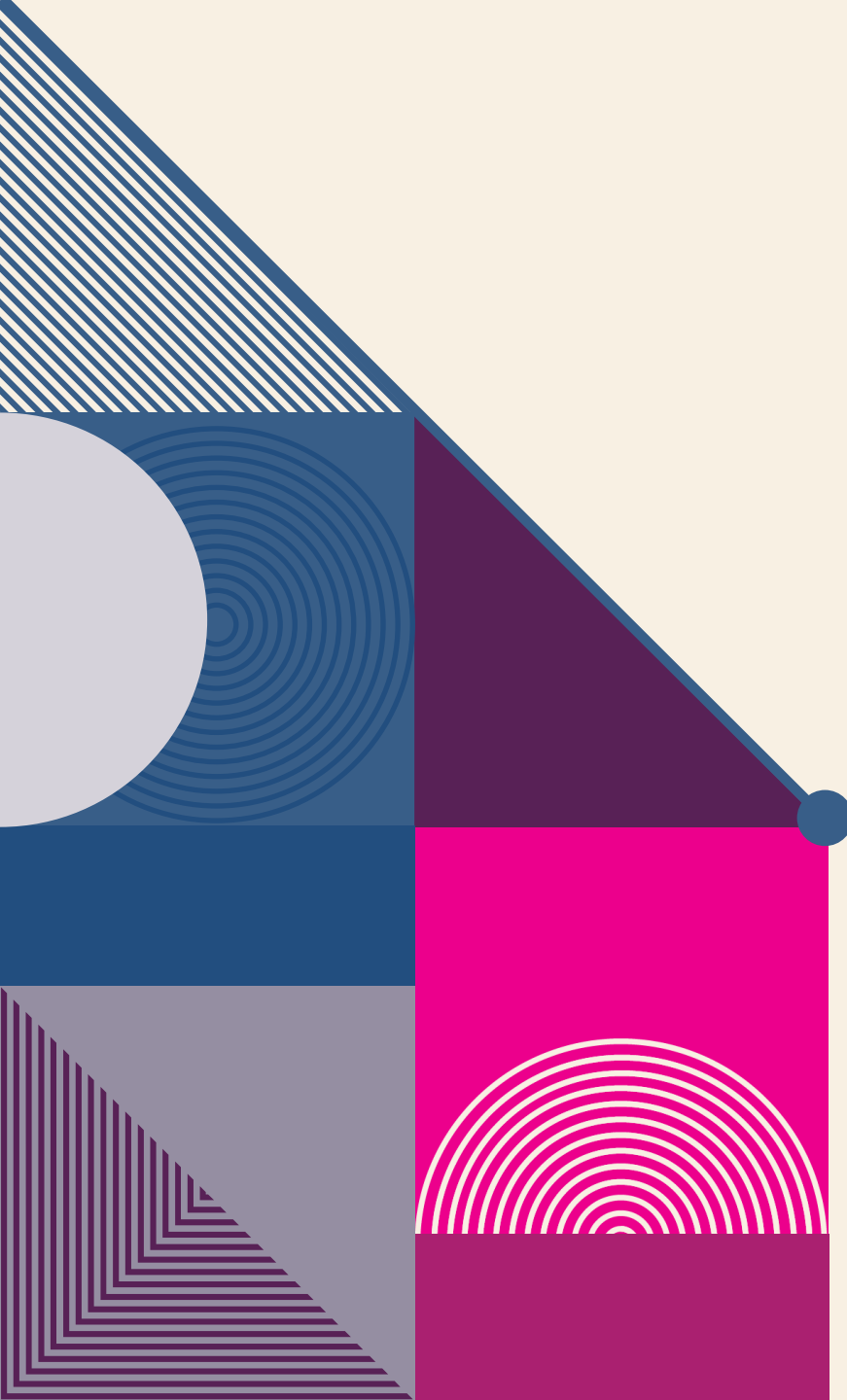
- Votes
- Introduce legislation
- Cosponsor legislation
- Sign-On Letters
- Appropriations Portal Submissions
- Private conversations and correspondence

Constituent Services

- Help with federal agencies
- Earmarks
- Help back home in the community
- Publicity, fundraising



**HOW CAN WE CULTIVATE
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
CONGRESSIONAL
STATE/DISTRICT OFFICES?**



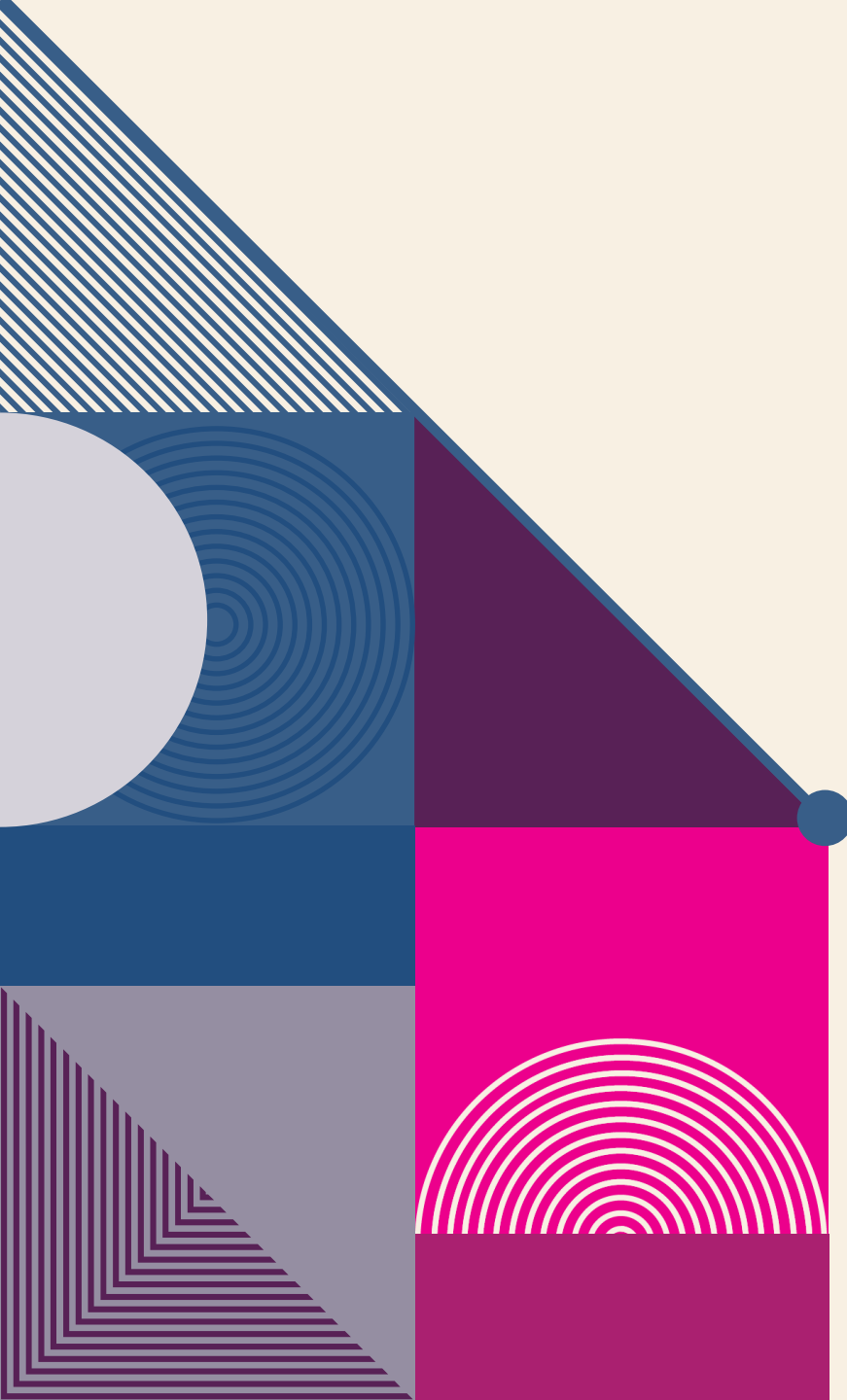
Cultivating Relationships with Congressional State/District Offices?

District office staff are the people-pleasers, people who don't want to say no; their focus is ensuring the boss is always portrayed in the most favorable light.

Advise state/district staff what to do when they get constituents seeking homelessness assistance.

Invite the state/district staff (and by extension their lawmaker bosses) to

1. fundraising events and regular meetings of your boards; or
2. when you cut the ribbons to open new facilities or re-open refurbished facilities; or
3. if you're handing the keys to rental units to your clients; or
4. if there's going to be a ceremony in city hall, the chamber of commerce, or a house of worship, to announce a homeless services grant.



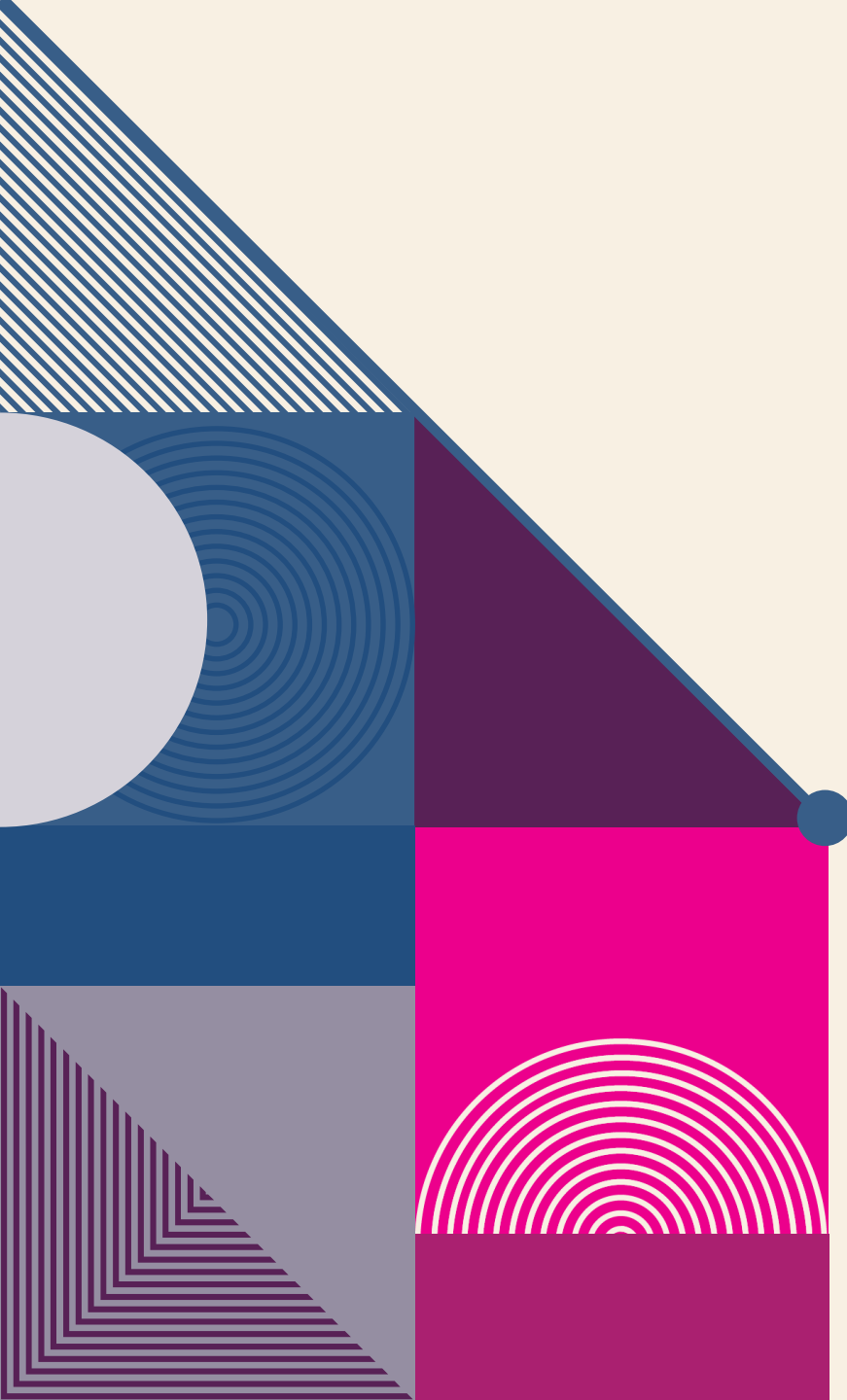
Cultivating Relationships with Congressional State/District Offices?

Maybe give state/district staff speaking roles or some degree of prominence. And if they can't make it, send them media coverage or your videos.

Urge them to ask their bosses to discuss special events and achievements on the House or Senate floor.

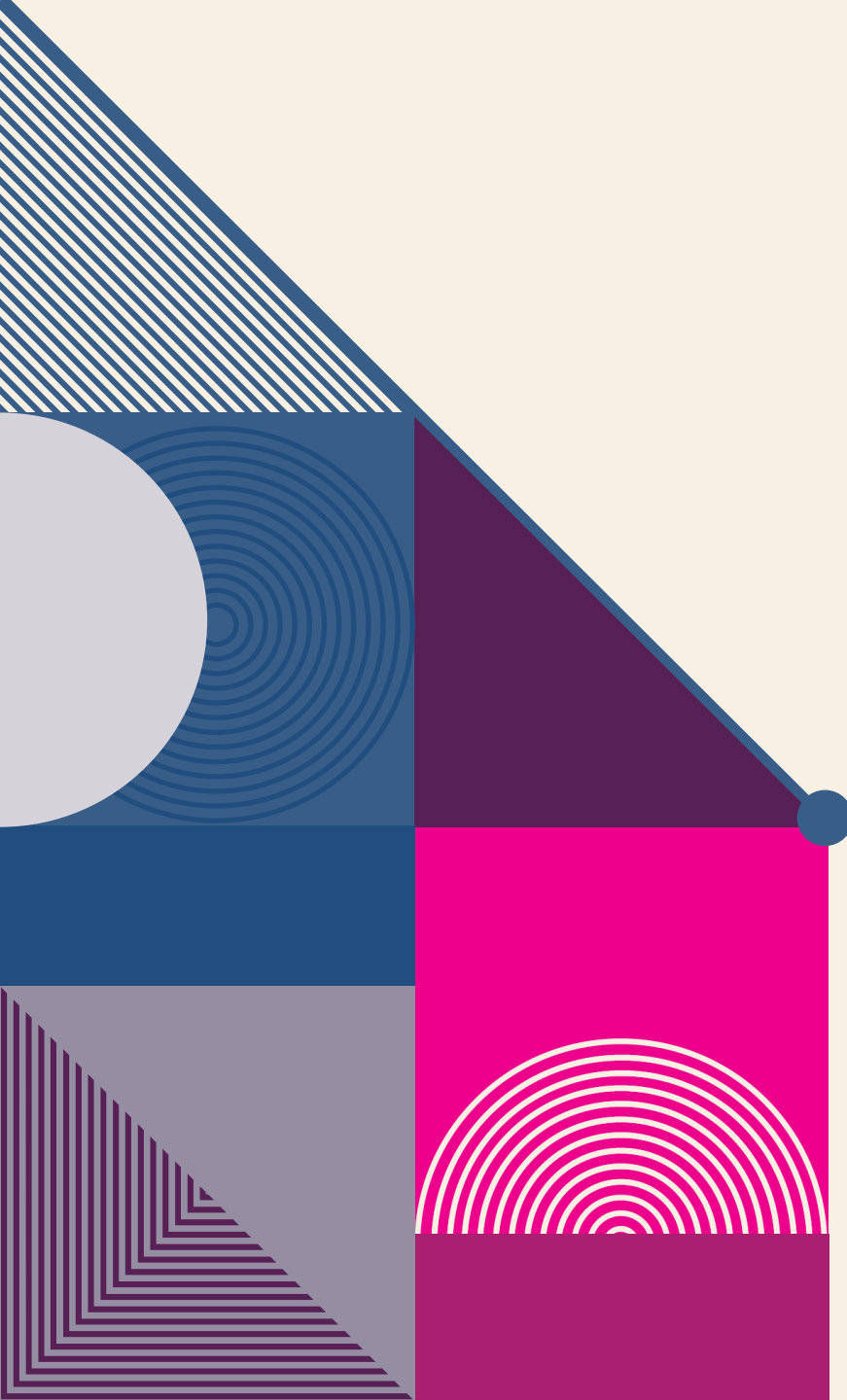
If it's not going to interfere with your work, what about asking lawmakers or their staffers to accompany outreach teams or participate in the annual point in time count?

Organize roundtables, in person or virtual, for housing and homelessness groups from across the area to make presentations for and discuss relevant issues with lawmakers and / or their staff. The more credible organizations represented, the more likely the lawmaker (or their senior staffer) will show up.



Cultivating Relationships with Congressional State/District Offices: Homelessness & Housing Roundtables

- Secure a centrally-located space accessible to the public at a particular time.
- Invite CoC representatives, homeless service providers, people with lived experience, affordable housing programs, public housing authorities, and relevant state/local government agencies.
- Set a clear, concise agenda to keep everyone focused. This is where collective advocacy and speaking with one unified voice is helpful – everyone will be on the same page, and you can work out any differences in advance.
- Ensure organizations represented can present on their achievements, their challenges, their plans, their needs, and how they can work better together.
- Introduce hot topics, such as why block-granting is a bad idea.
- Invite federal, state, and local lawmakers (or their staffers) to attend.

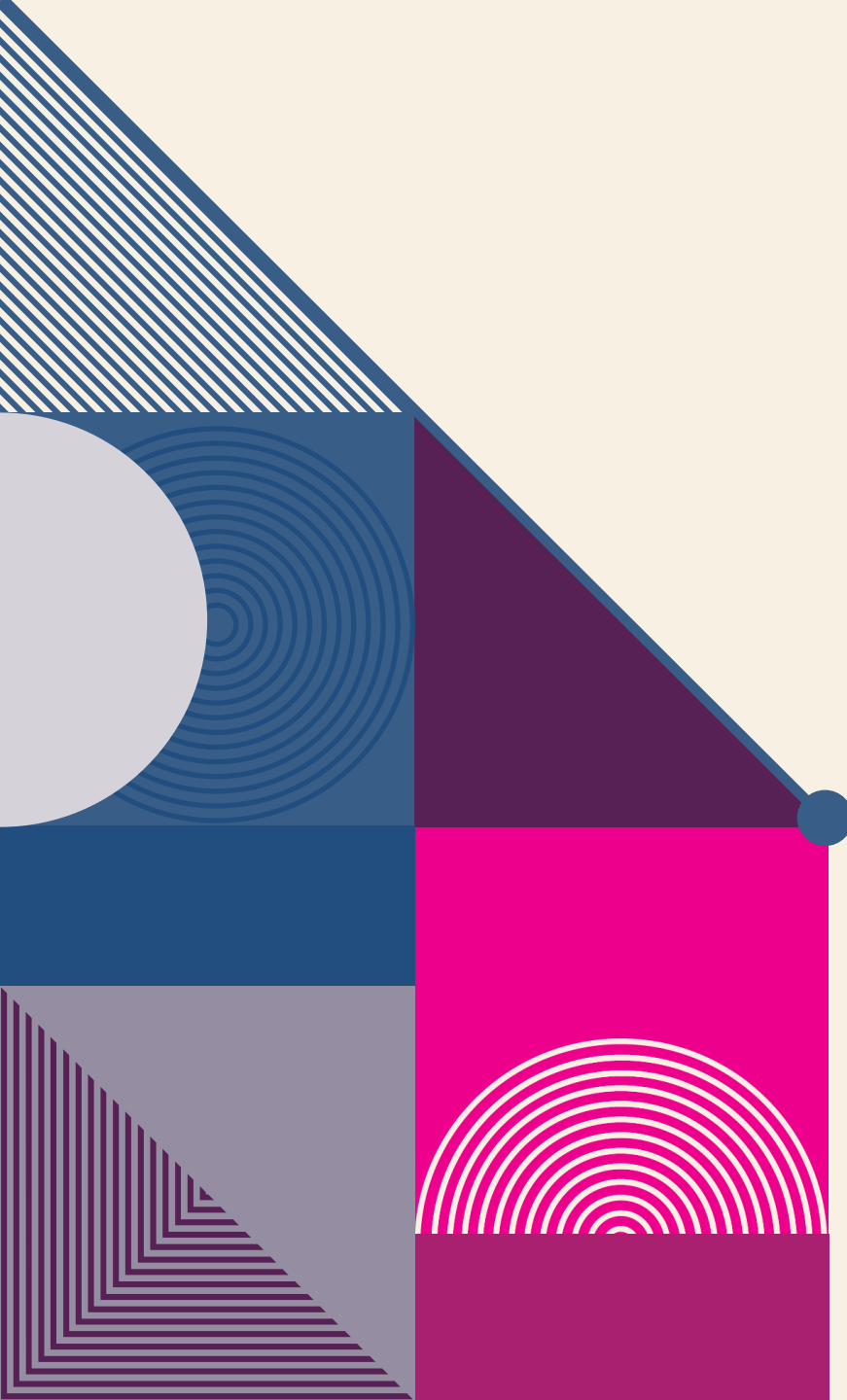


Cultivating Relationships with Congressional State/District Offices: Homelessness & Housing Roundtables – A Win-Win

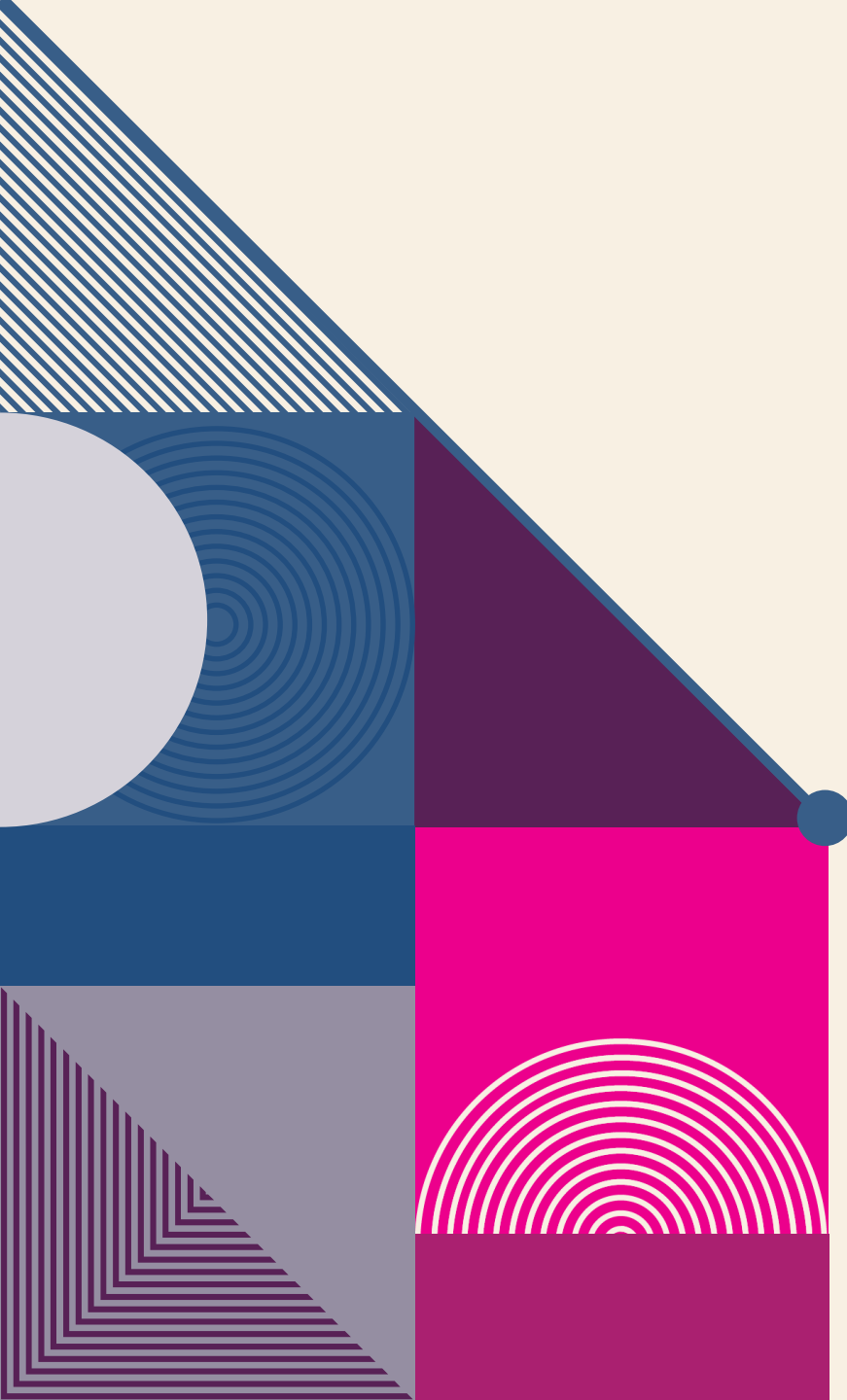
- Homelessness and housing organizations win because they get face time with important elected officials or their staffers.
- Lawmakers and their staffers win because they get to know many local experts in housing and homelessness in less than two hours.
- Organize these roundtables annually or biennially, scheduling them around big events like federal appropriations season or the opening of the state legislative session; and at future roundtables, include representatives from other sectors (e.g., business, homeowners, faith, and health care).
- Use these roundtables to boost our advocacy on homelessness and housing issues.



**HOW CAN WE EXPAND OUR
COALITION?**

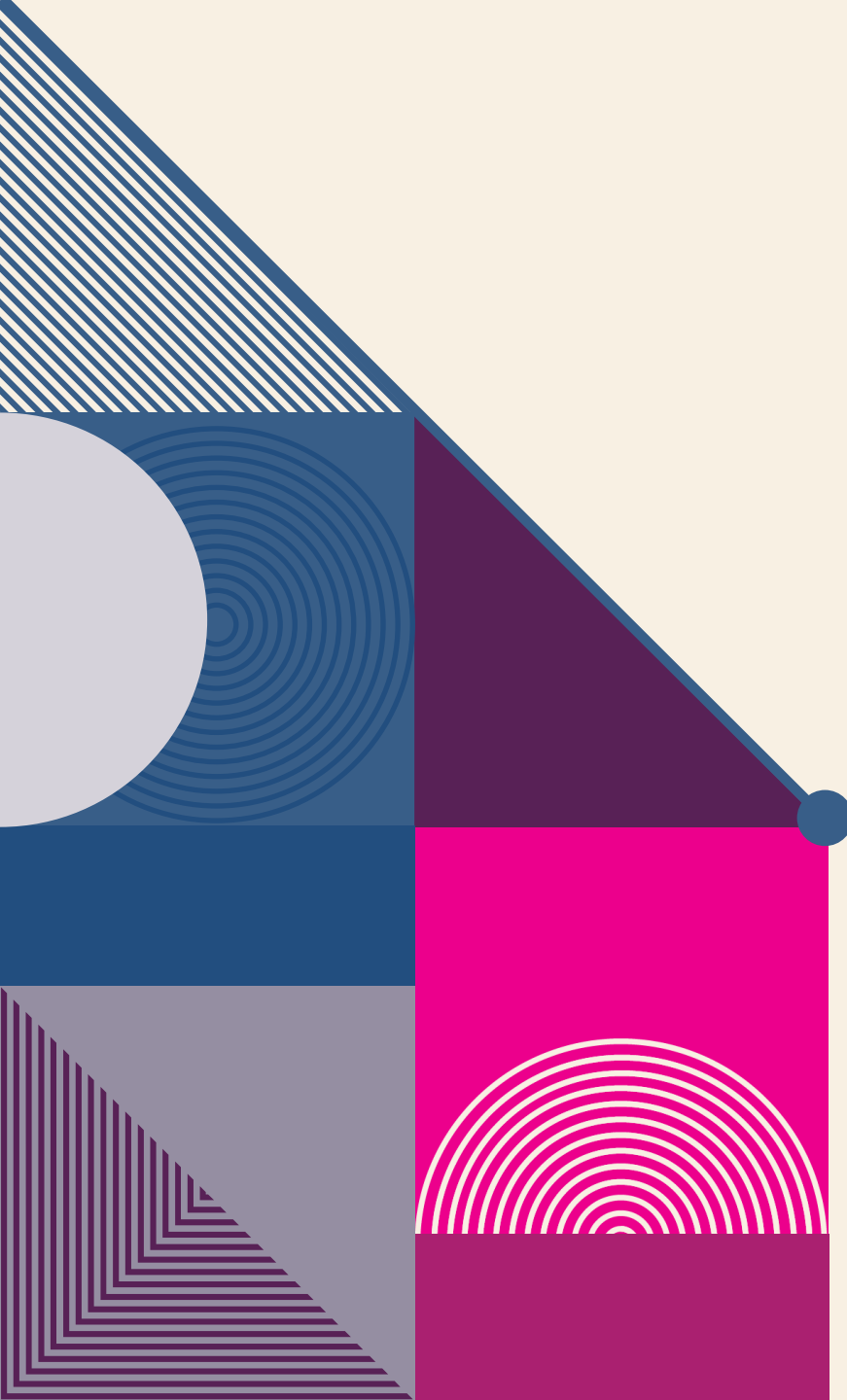
An abstract geometric design on the left side of the slide. It features a large light blue circle in the upper left, a dark blue square with concentric circles below it, a dark purple triangle to the right of the circle, a solid dark blue square below the circle, a solid magenta square below the dark blue square, a solid purple square at the bottom left, and a magenta square with white concentric semi-circles above the bottom purple square. A small dark blue circle is at the intersection of the dark purple triangle and the magenta square.

Who might lobby/advocate with us (or at least in support of us) on homelessness?



Who might lobby/advocate with us or at least in support of us on homelessness?

1. Local governments (mayors, city councilors, county executives, county councilors, housing commissioners, homelessness directors, and their staffers)
2. Businesses, Chambers of Commerce
3. Homeowners and Neighborhood Associations
4. Faith-based groups
5. Landlords and Public Housing Authorities
6. Big health care
7. Law enforcement
8. Academics
9. Adjacent sectors that may also serve people experiencing homelessness, including health care, vocational education, and food insecurity



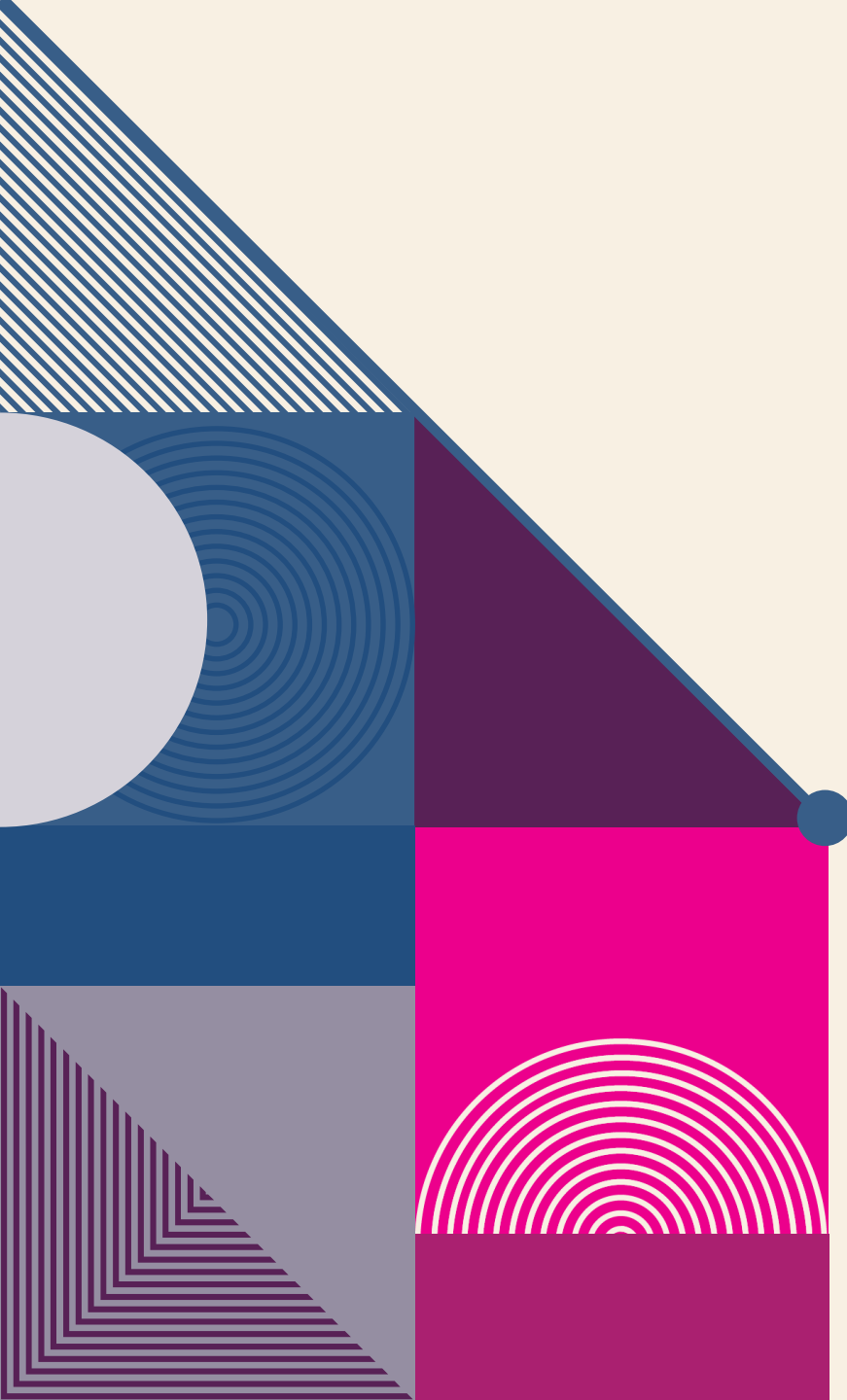
Inventorying Your Potential Lobbying/ Advocacy Allies

1. Who are they?
2. On which issues would they be useful?
3. What are they willing to do?
4. How/when can they be approached?
5. Who should approach them?

Perhaps you start with your board members, your bankers, your landlords, your hospital directors, the faith-based leaders whose volunteers always show up for your events. And each representative you consult can introduce you to additional potential recruits.



**HOW SHOULD WE EXPRESS
DISAPPOINTMENT WITH OUR
LAWMAKERS?**

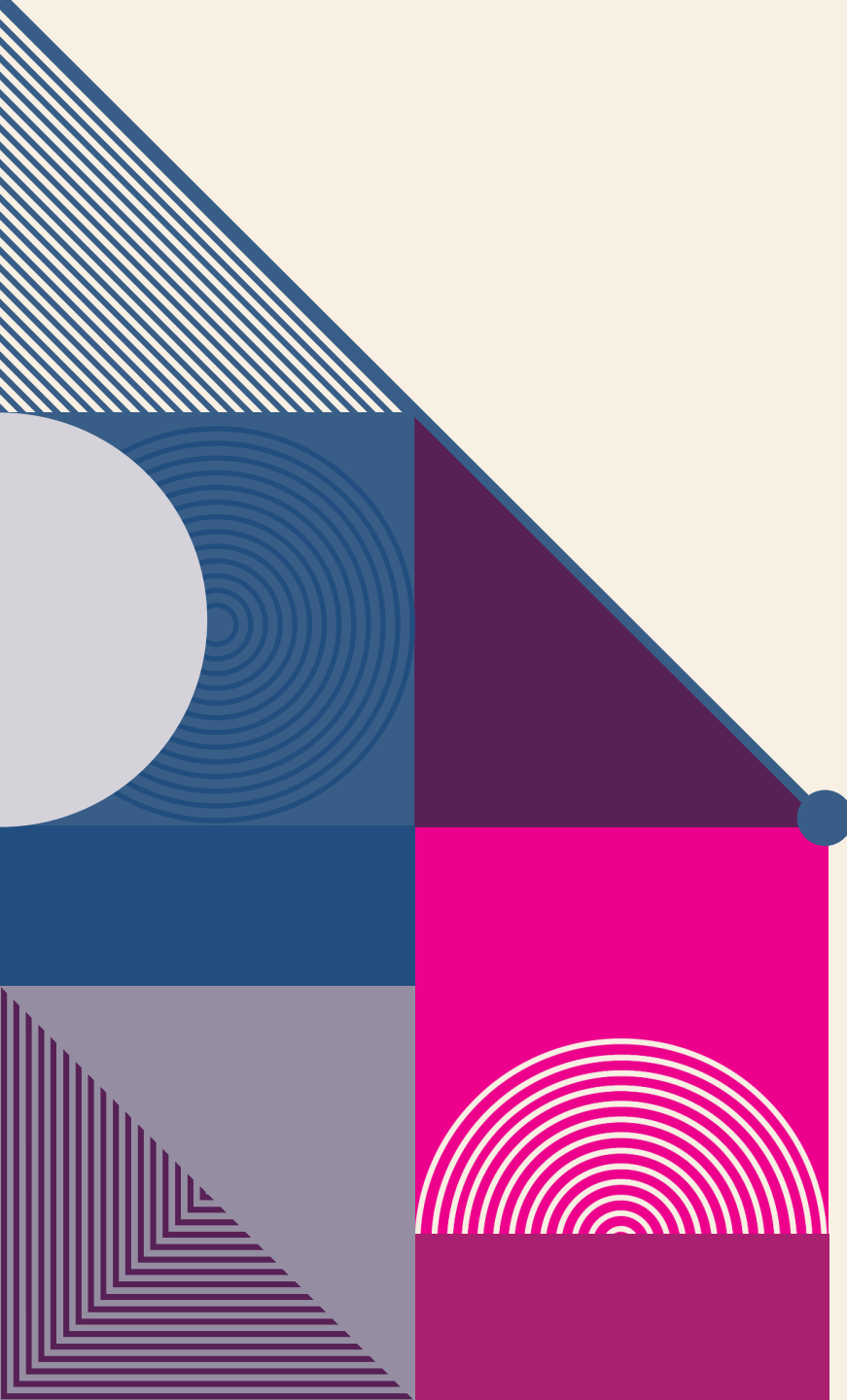


Expressing Disappointment With Our Lawmakers

1. Did we advocate/lobby the office in a timely manner, i.e., convey our views in time to influence the office's decision-making process?
2. Was the bad decision a genuine surprise?
3. Has the lawmaker been helpful in the past?
4. Are there other things we can work with the lawmaker on instead?



HOW CAN WE MAKE POLICY REQUESTS OF OUR LAWMAKERS?



Making Policy Requests Of Our Lawmakers

1. Lay the groundwork / set the scene

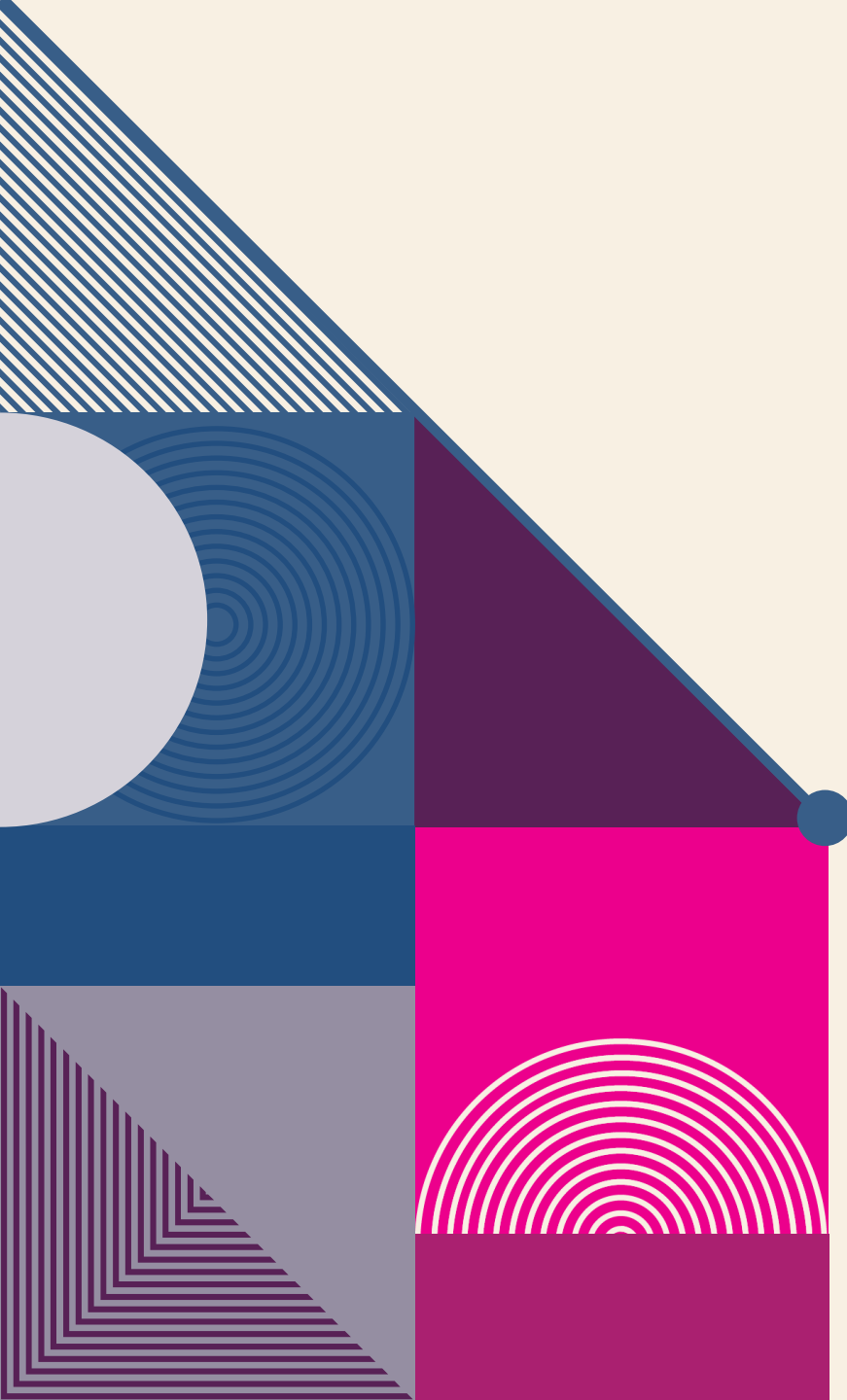
- Build towards the request

2. Show our importance to the community

- Why should the lawmaker pay attention to us

3. Talk about accomplishments as well as challenges

- Remind the lawmaker of the things we do well
- Don't make our challenges seem unsolvable



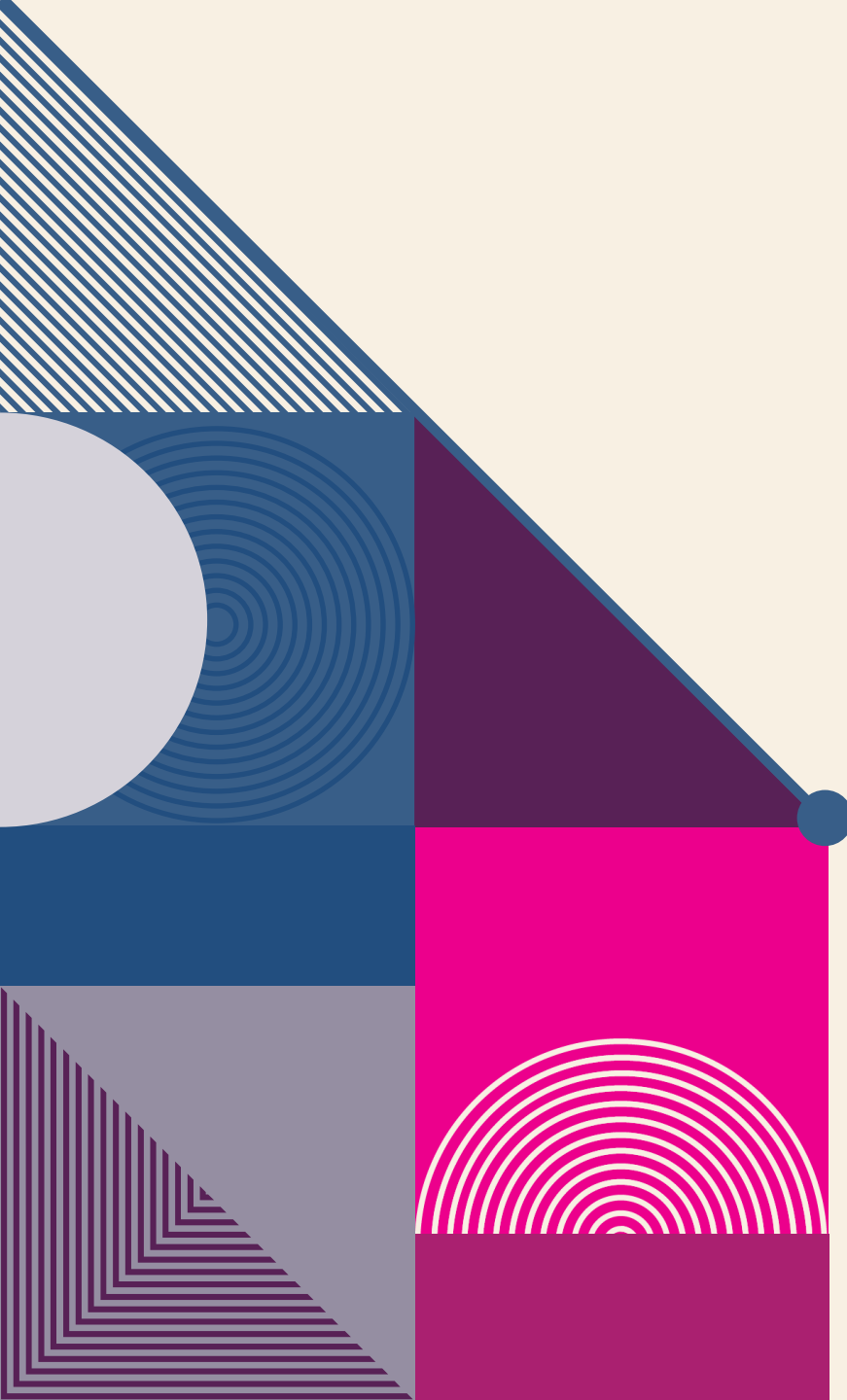
Making Policy Requests Of Our Lawmakers

4. Localize your request—how it would benefit constituents back home.

- For example, asking for the Alliance’s funding request is great, but quickly pivot to why your community needs additional funds.

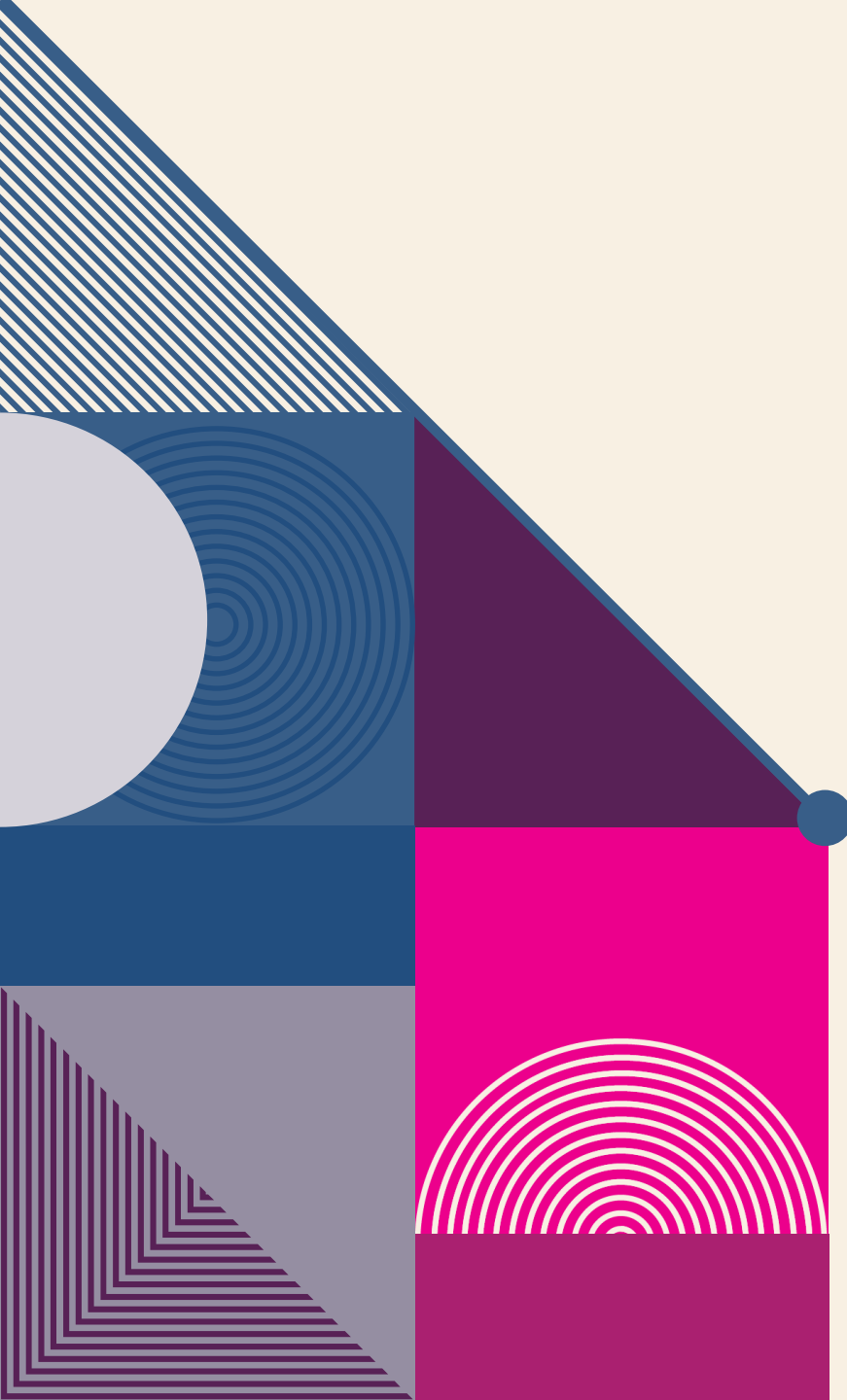
5. Understand what motivates your lawmakers—how can you appeal to them?

- What does your lawmaker LOVE? Saving money, spending money, helping people they know, helping humanity, improving the community, getting government off our backs, promoting faith-based solutions, publicity, wants to be seen helping old people...
- What does your lawmaker HATE? Spending money, government programs that don’t work, community becoming less livable, treating people unfairly, unsheltered homelessness...



Making Policy Requests Of Our Lawmakers

7. Are there favorable precedents you can invoke in support of your request?
8. Are you asking for something within the lawmaker's power?
9. Think about how to streamline your request for lawmakers with little time and / or short attention spans (elevator pitch, or “walk with me” pitch).
10. How to react when lawmakers interrupt your meetings with their staffers.



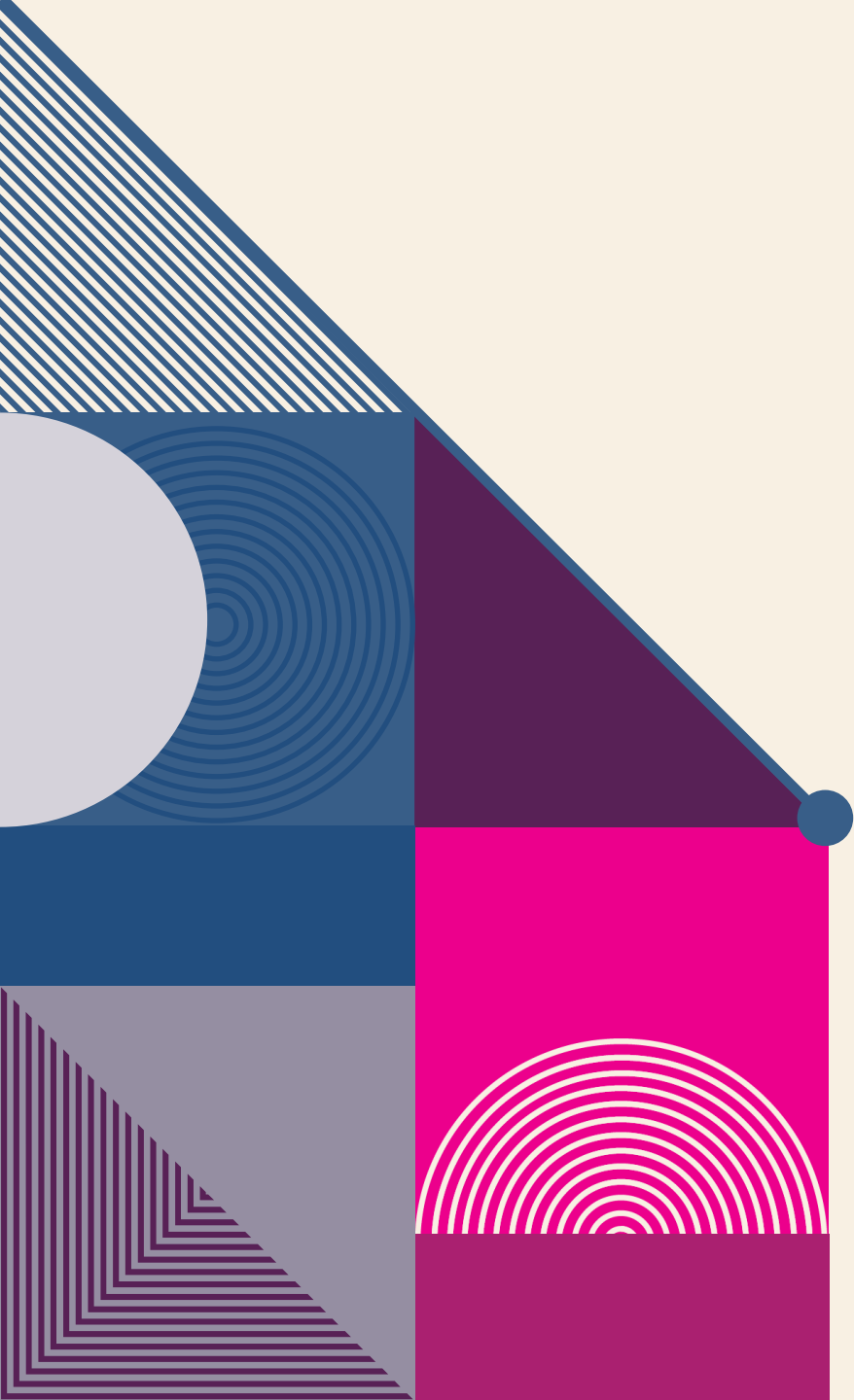
Problem, Solution, Request (PSR)

First Draft: Equal Access Rule

P: Gender expansive individuals are more likely to experience homelessness and are more likely to be turned away by landlords and families.

S: The Equal Access Rule makes it easier for gender expansive people to access shelter and housing, so they don't have to live outside and be at risk of harm.

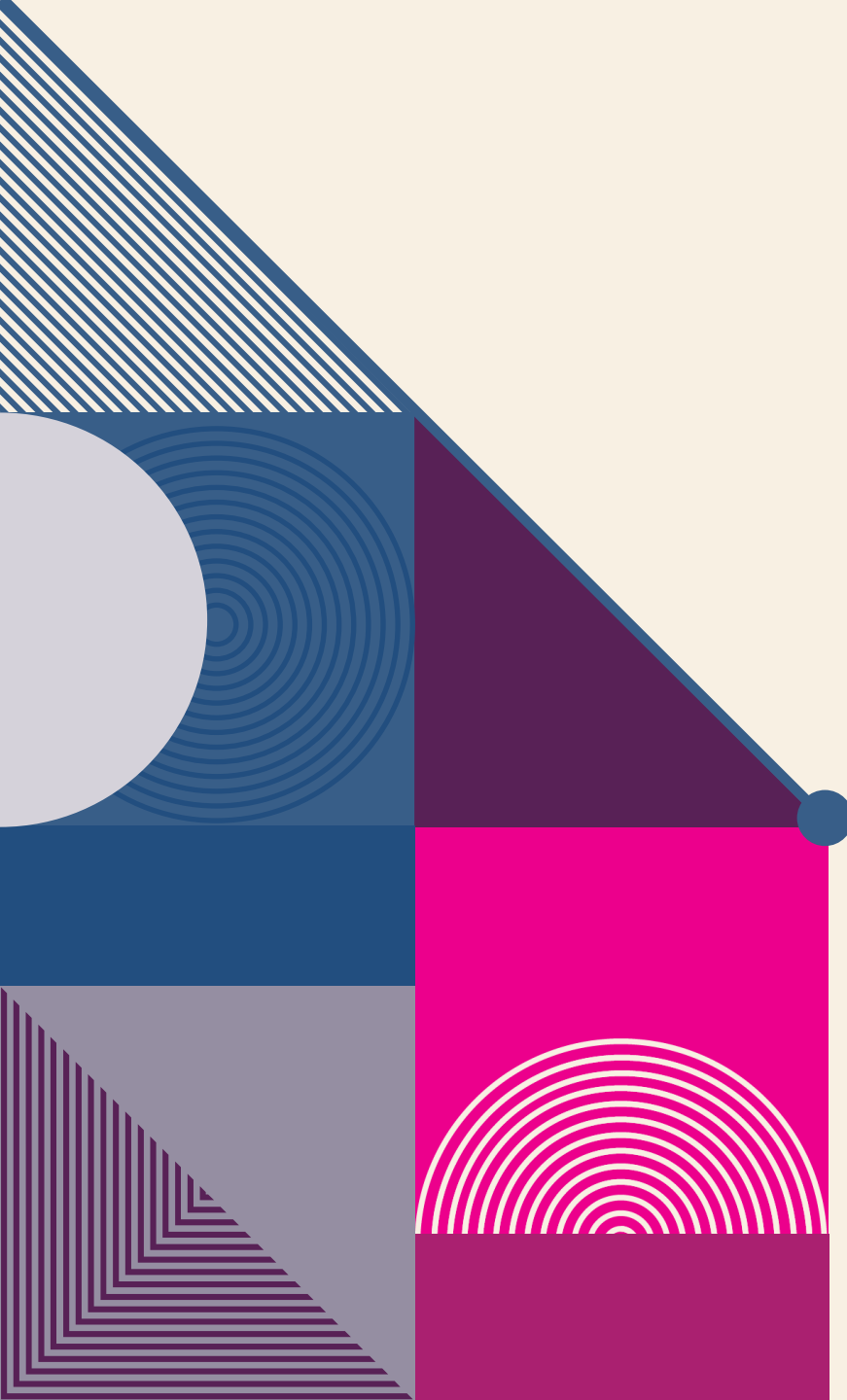
R: Oppose the Administration's attempts to rescind the Equal Access Rule.



P: The Equal Access Rule has reduced homelessness in our community experienced by gender expansive individuals because it prohibits discrimination against people in HUD programs on the basis of sexual orientation, marital status, or gender identity. However, the Trump Administration has declared it will seek the rule's rescission, which makes gender expansive people more likely to experience homelessness because they are more likely to be turned away or made to feel unwelcome.

S: The Equal Access Rule should be retained. Our local homelessness response network depends on faith-based providers of services, and all of them easily comply with the Equal Access Rule. In fact, among the rule's biggest supporters, are groups which represent victims of domestic violence. Moreover, in reducing unsheltered homelessness among gender expansive people, the rule reduces crime and costs that would otherwise be borne by communities.

R: Oppose the Administration's attempts to rescind the Equal Access Rule by signing on to Senator X's letter to HUD Secretary Turner.



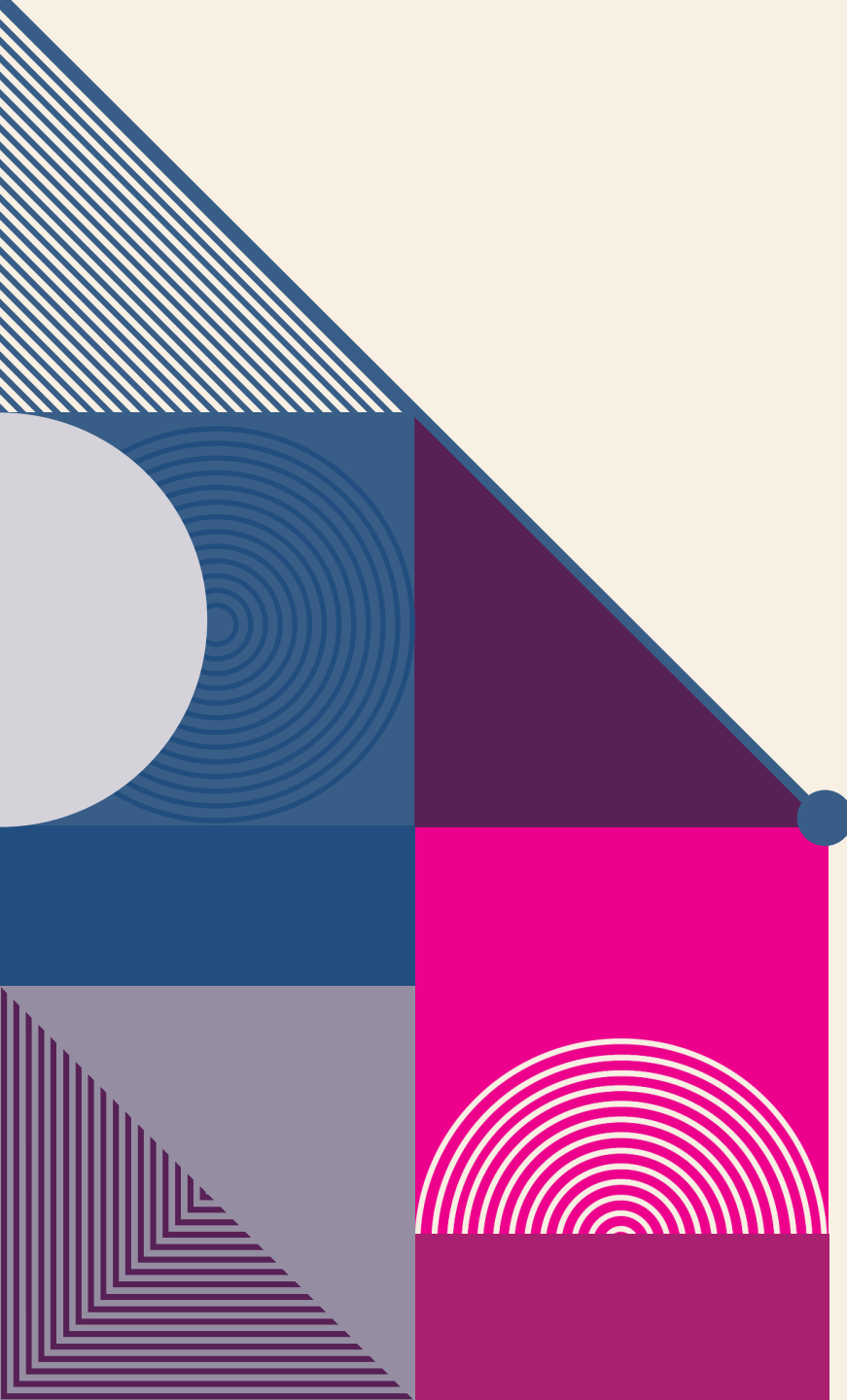
Problem, Solution, Request (PSR)

Second Draft:

P: The Equal Access Rule has reduced homelessness in our community experienced by gender expansive individuals because it prohibits discrimination against people in HUD programs on the basis of sexual orientation, marital status, or gender identity. However, the Trump Administration has declared it will seek the rule's rescission, which makes gender expansive people more likely to experience homelessness because they are more likely to be turned away or feel unwelcomed.

S: The Equal Access Rule should be retained. Our local homelessness response network depends on faith-based providers of services, and all of them easily comply with the Equal Access Rule. In fact, among the rule's biggest supporters are groups which represent victims of domestic violence. Moreover, in reducing unsheltered homelessness among gender expansive people, the rule reduces crime and costs that would otherwise be borne by communities.

R: Oppose the Administration's attempts to rescind the Equal Access Rule by signing on to Senator So-and-So's letter to HUD Secretary Turner.



Stories

Lawmakers love stories. And that's great news for the homelessness sector because our work generates stories:

- how someone became homeless because of an illegal eviction,
- how a family got back on its feet and into permanent housing because of few months of rapid re-housing assistance,
- how an encampment sweep offering no alternative placements made it harder to help unhoused people in your community,
- how a low barrier shelter made it easier for unsheltered people to come inside,
- how you connected victims of domestic violence and their children with emergency housing vouchers, and
- how you managed to get a man who had been outside for years and suffering into permanent supportive housing...

SAVE THE DATE

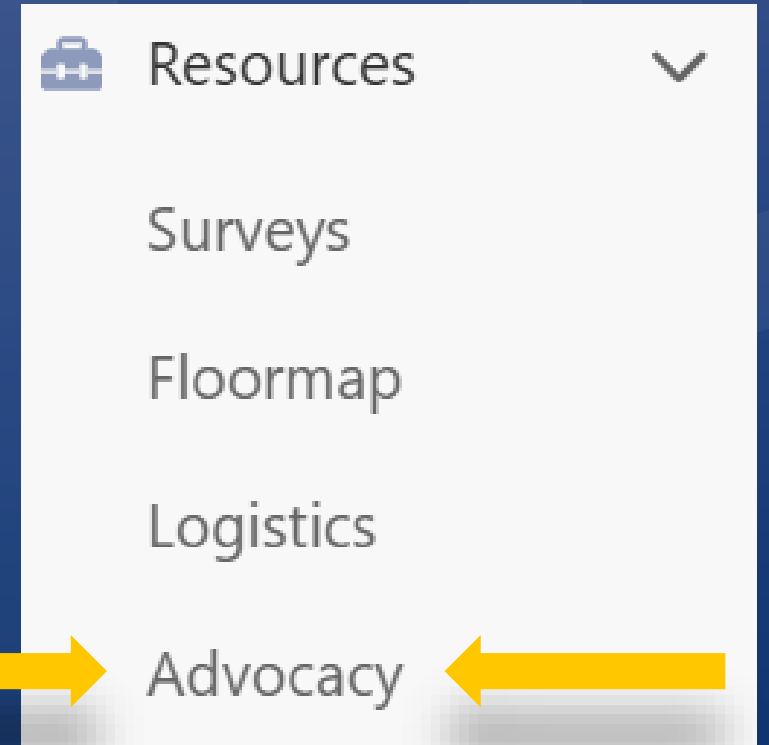
***Virtual* Capitol Hill Day:
September 17**



ENDHOMELESSNESS.ORG

WHOVA > RESOURCES > ADVOCACY

Engage with
our advocacy
resources on
Whova.



TAKE ACTION TODAY

Prepare to take
action and sign
up for our
Advocacy Alerts.



ENDHOMELESSNESS.ORG

TAKE ACTION TO ADVANCE A SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED BUDGET

FY2026 Federal Budget Resource Series

Help the Alliance advocate for increased federal funding — and reject cuts to vital programs — using the resources below.

Alliance Resources

Budget Impact Spreadsheets

Take Action



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

ENDHOMELESSNESS.ORG



ROLE-PLAYING EXERCISES (10 MINUTES TO PREPARE AND 8 MINUTES TO PERFORM)

1. Block-granting Homelessness Programs (5 Roles)

Where: The Representative's district office.

Which office: A conservative Republican on House Financial Services who almost always supports the Administration's proposals. A devout Catholic, he loves promoting faith-based solutions and hates spending money.

The staffer: The district director, the eyes and ears in the community for the boss.

Background: Although the staffer is not a policy expert, the staffer is so politically sharp most local pols think the staffer should run for office. The staffer is very supportive of the CoC and homeless services providers, often appearing at their events and helping them to navigate local politics. The staffer doesn't normally take this sort of policy meeting, but there's a big vote coming up next week at a committee mark up on block-granting homelessness programs--consolidating CoC and HOPWA into ESG, along with a \$600M cut in the combined funding for all three programs—and this is the last chance for local homelessness leaders to make their case to the Representative's office.

The lobbyists/advocates: A CoC leader; the representative of a Catholic charity that is very involved in homelessness; the Democratic mayor's deputy for homelessness; and the leader of the Community Business District, a Republican banker who sits on the CoC's board of directors.



2. Increased funding for Homeless Assistance Grants (5 roles)

Where: the largest shelter in the state. This facility was extensively modernized during COVID, so it can accommodate older people and people with infirmities. The shelter's much-admired director, a person with lived experience, has worked with homeowners and businesses in the upscale community to reduce friction.

Which office: a progressive Democrat who won office just five months ago and was promptly awarded by leadership with a seat on the Senate Transportation-Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee.



Background: Wanting to make a name for herself, the Senator is focused on homelessness, and she wants to lead the effort to include a robust increase in funding for Homeless Assistance Grants in the FY26 appropriations bill. She wants to know what the best arguments are for more homelessness funding, but she also wants to know how to respond to the other side's arguments because she genuinely wants to win over her opponents. She has asked for help.



The lobbyists/advocates: A veteran case manager, a representative from the state's most popular health insurance carrier (Paisier Kermanente), the president of a local homeowners' association, and the senior partner in Gotham City's biggest law firm. In fact, it was the lawyer who secured the meeting with the Senator, who, naturally, appreciated the lawyer's tireless fundraising for her campaign.



3. More compensation for front-line homeless services staff (5 roles)

Where: in the DC office of a Republican who represents an increasingly purple district. He is looking for issues that will show him to be an independent thinker. The Representative's father was a union leader, and he values hard work and helping the less fortunate.

Which staffer: A new staffer with an LCSW who has worked extensively as a psychiatric social worker.



The lobbyists/advocates: A CoC director, a case manager with lived experience, the vice president for community relations at the largest hospital in the district, and an academic from the state university who has extensively studied how recruitment and retention challenges adversely impact homeless services.



The lobbyists/advocates have brought a petition in support of increased compensation for front-line homeless services workers which is signed by more than 200 case managers and outreach workers. The lobbyists/advocates are asking that HUD be required to calculate increases in the cost of living for services, include that amount in the President's budget request, and, if appropriated, direct that funding to frontline homeless services staff.

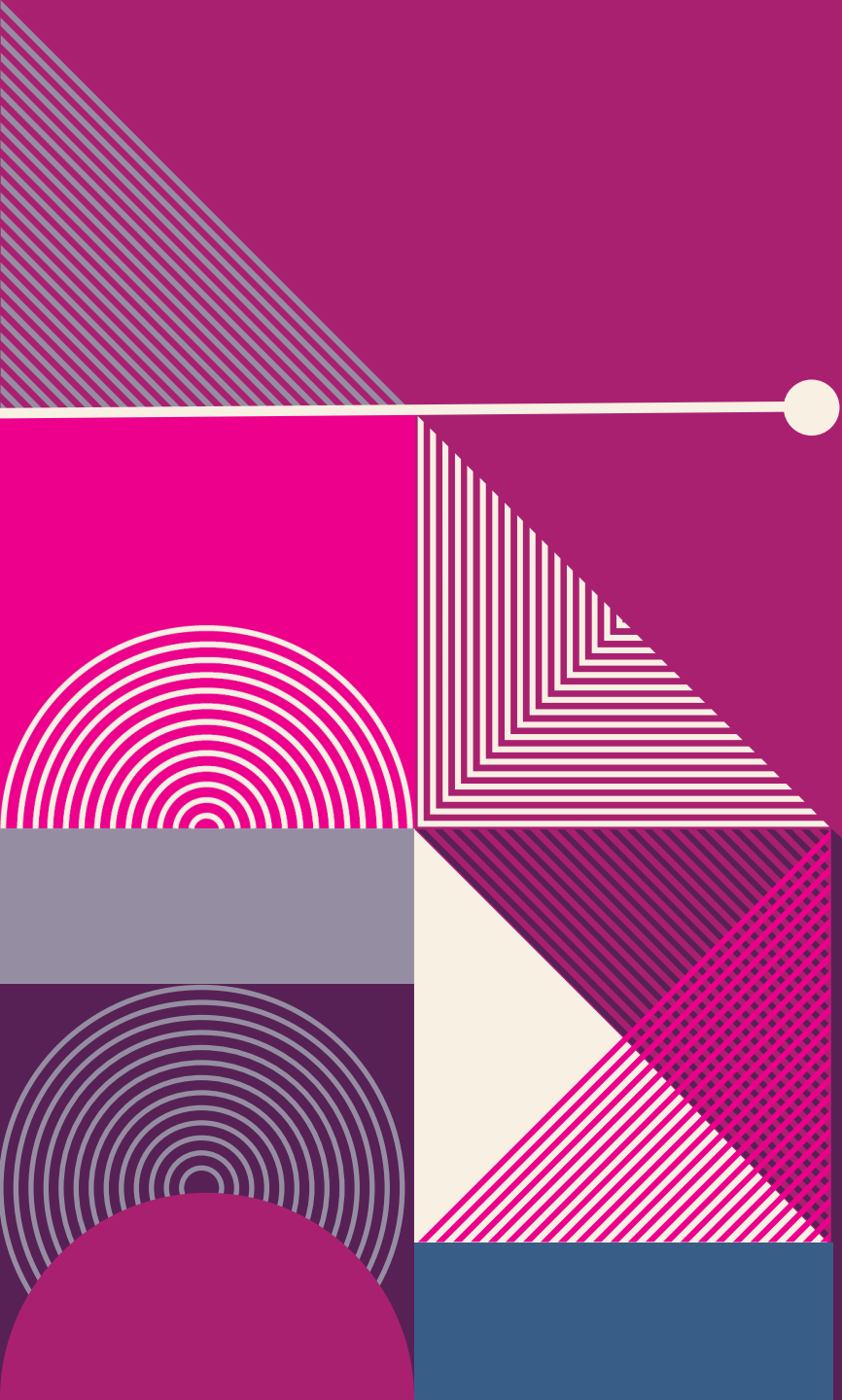
4. Continued funding for Emergency Housing Vouchers (5 roles)

Where: a Zoomer with a staffer in the DC office.

Which office: a moderate Republican who is often willing to challenge the Administration, especially when important constituent issues are at stake. A senior member on the Banking Committee, the Senator has often worked privately to increase funding for Homeless Assistance Grants. However, she will be up for re-election next year and may face a primary challenge from the Republican state attorney general who is a close ally of the President—which some observers say may explain her vote against an amendment to provide continued funding for EHVs. Although the Senate will go into the House-Senate conference with no additional funding for EHVs, the House bill does include that additional funding, so EHV could be included in the final conference report.

The staffer: a long time Congressional aide who only recently joined the Senator's office and may have misread the Senator's position on the amendment. The Senator's veteran legislative director asked the staffer to share with the lobbyists a long list of the Senator's favorable votes for homelessness and affordable housing legislation.

The lobbyists/advocates: A CoC representative, the president of a local landlord association, a leader of a national domestic violence survivors' group, and the assistant director of a PHA.

An abstract geometric design on the left side of the slide. It features a vertical stack of shapes: a pink square at the top with white concentric semi-circles; a grey rectangle; a dark purple square with white concentric circles; and a blue square at the bottom. To the right of these shapes is a white triangle pointing right, which is further divided into sections with diagonal pink and white stripes and a pink dotted pattern. Above the pink square, a series of white concentric semi-circles extends from the left edge. A horizontal white line with a small white circle at its right end extends from the pink square towards the center of the slide.

THANK YOU!