

Top tips for collaborating with government

1. Use the internet or your network of contacts to conduct research to:
 - identify the most appropriate government department, body or group to contact
 - identify the most appropriate person within the department/body to contact
 - understand what policies, initiatives or projects they may be working on that directly impacts or affects your disease area or patient population.
2. Remember that most government policies are general; therefore it may be difficult to identify the policies that could have an impact on your organisation or patient members. For example, a patients' organisation for Alzheimer's Disease may be interested in general policies on improved health in people aged more than 65 years, or anything on neurological disease in general.
3. Make sure all communications are clear and concise. Always ensure that you provide accurate and factual information about your disease and your organisation.
4. Be certain of your policy position(s) and messages and be able to demonstrate the evidence behind them.
5. Establish in advance clear objectives and goals for all communications and collaborations/projects.
6. Be clear on the level and type of input you need from the government body/contact person.
7. While you may need to be persistent to establish contacts, always be professional and polite in your interactions. Listen to what is being said to you and try to understand the other person's point of view.
8. Remember that you may need to be flexible and willing to compromise to reach an agreement or achieve the next step in the relationship.
9. Always follow up any meeting or teleconference by sending a thank you letter/email and summarising the key points and actions from the meeting/call.
10. At all times be open, transparent and ethical, and ensure that you adhere to the mission of your organisation.