

Public Policy Brunch Frequently Asked Questions



Where and when should we hold the event?

When picking a location, think about the number of people who've attended prior events open to the public and the number of people you can afford to invite. This will vary from branch to branch, but it is a vital thing to consider when looking for a location at which to hold your event. When selecting a date, consider when your federal, state, and local legislatures are in session as well as the date of possible upcoming elections. These will likely affect the availability of your desired speakers and the interest of attendees.

Who should we invite to attend?

Start with your branch members and members-at-large who live in your community. Reach out to other organizations with whom you work closely on various issues. Have members reach out to their colleagues and friends. Look for ways to advertise your event to women outside your membership's networks including the [AAUW Member Showcase](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Making the event something that appeals to more than just your members will be both a service to the community and a way to attract new members.

Who should we invite to speak?

For a local event, you are more likely to get local elected officials such as your town mayor and city council members. Depending on your goal for the event, you may also choose to invite state elected officials and your members of Congress. Asking officials' aides and advisors to attend and speak may also be helpful. While they may not have the name recognition of their bosses, they can certainly know a lot about the political climate and process in your area, and they also have the ear of their boss. They also may be more available than their boss due to fewer speaking engagements.

How do we start getting in contact with local and state politicians?

Again, it may be easiest to start with who you know. Your members may be a rich resource of political contacts. Even if you haven't had prior contact with your elected officials, simply call their office to inquire about the best way to invite them to attend and speak. Some offices require a written request, while others will require direct contact with the scheduler.

How much will the event cost?

The cost will depend on many factors. For instance, charging admission for your event may decrease the size of your audience, but can also defray expenditures if your branch budget is very tight. You may want to hold a fundraiser beforehand to cover costs of the event. The location and logistics will also determine the cost. If your members prepare the food themselves, the costs will be lower than if you have the event catered. If you hold the event in a free space rather than renting a location, that will also cut costs. Check around to see if this option will work for your branch if finances are a concern.

What are effective ways to advertise?

Start advertising as early as you can once you have the important details finalized. Your advertising campaign should first focus on your members. Print an announcement of the coming event in your branch newsletter so members not involved in the planning process are aware of what's going to happen. Encourage your membership to engage in a word-of-mouth campaign to spread awareness about this event. Prospective attendees are more likely to attend if they are invited by someone they know. Send announcements about your event to community bulletin boards, local newspapers, local religious congregations, and partner organizations and post details on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and the [AAUW Member Showcase](#). See the AAUW [Media Kit Program in a Box](#) for additional suggestions and resources.

How do we maintain connections with elected officials after the event?

The most important and immediate thing you can do is to send a thank you note to all speakers soon after the event. A genuine, perhaps even handwritten, card or note expressing the branch's gratitude for their participation and insights will be well-received. Follow up on policy asks as well, and use information from the AAUW website to provide any additional information the elected official may have requested with regards to AAUW's position on issues.

How do we maintain connections with community members after the event?

Have non-members register and sign in as they enter the event. This is a quick way to gather the names and vital contact information of prospective members. Also, have materials available at the event for prospective members to take. These might include your most recent newsletter, membership brochures, [Action Network fliers](#), the Public Policy Program brochure, or a flier about upcoming events. Sometime during the week after the event, send an email and/or letter to all non-members who attended. Thank them for coming to the brunch and provide them further information about AAUW and your branch, and invite them to get involved.

Sample Timeline for the Event

Use the following timeline to help plan your event.

6 Weeks Before Event

Appoint organizer and team. Contact coalition partners. Decide on an audience.

5 Weeks Before Event

Plan Budget. Decide on location and format. Invite moderator and speakers.

4 Weeks Before Event

Finalize date and location. Finalize panel speakers.

3 Weeks Before Event

Begin advertising event. Compile list of media contacts. Add to the [AAUW Member Showcase](#). Order supplies from AAUW such as public policy programs brochures and AAUW posters.

2 Weeks Before Event.

Re-confirm speakers. Increase audience recruitment. Prepare on-site handouts and media packet. Choose spokesperson.

5 Days Before Event

Fax or e-mail media advisory. Finalize media packets. Call coalition partners to assess attendance.

2 Days Before Event

Make media reminder calls.

Day of Event

Fax or e-mail news release. Be prepared to answer media questions before and after the event.

After Event

Follow up with media. Thank participants.

