



Guide to Seeking Institutional Support to Attend Social Science Advocacy Day

Are you interested in participating in Social Science Advocacy Day in Washington, DC in April 2024 but not sure how to secure support from your institution/organization? Use the guide below to communicate with your dean, director, supervisor, etc. about the value of this event and the benefits you and your organization will receive as a participant.

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About Social Science Advocacy Day

Social Science Advocacy Day ([link](#)) is an activity of the Consortium of Social Science Associations ([COSSA](#)). This annual event brings together social and behavioral scientists and science advocates from across the country to engage with policymakers in Congress about issues important to our community, such as federal funding for research at agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, among others. It is COSSA’s signature annual event focused on putting social and behavioral science front and center before Congress.

Participants are teamed up with others from their home state and participate in a day of in-person meetings with House and Senate offices on Capitol Hill. Through these meetings, advocates discuss why federal government support for social and behavioral science research is so critical and how they, their research, and their university or organization can help inform policy at the national level. This fun, informative event is a must for anyone within the social and behavioral science community who cares about sustainable funding for these fields and who believes research should help inform sound public policy.

Goals

There are two overarching goals of Social Science Advocacy Day:

1. Funding for federal agencies and programs that support social and behavioral science research is never guaranteed. Social scientists lend their voices in support of funding for social and behavioral science research programs.
2. Social Science Advocacy Day provides an opportunity to make important connections between a university/organization and elected officials. It allows participants to discuss their research activities and interests, highlight notable findings or applications, and bring additional visibility to the research efforts of the institution.

Benefits

Past advocates have shared that participation in Social Science Advocacy Day provided important opportunities to share their research/expertise and serve as a resource to policymakers in the future. In fact, many advocates continue to participate year after year, which allows them to continue nurturing relationships with Members of Congress and their staff.

In general, participants in Social Science Advocacy Day can expect to:

- Learn how federal funding and policy impact social and behavioral science research at the university level.
- Learn how to communicate with policymakers and discuss research in ways that are helpful to them.
- Gain visibility for your institution/organization and research activities.
- Connect with social and behavioral science researchers and professionals from across the country and across different fields.
- Learn a unique set of skills that they can bring to their future work (e.g., teaching, research, advocacy, service, etc.).

Logistics

Dates	Monday, April 8 – Tuesday, April 9, 2024
Location	Downtown Washington, DC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday, April 8: 20 F Street NW Conference Center (link) • Tuesday, April 9: 20 F Street NW Conference Center AND House and Senate Offices on Capitol Hill
Suggested Travel Dates	Arrive: Sunday, April 7 (anytime) Depart: Tuesday, April 9 (after 6:00 pm)
Draft Schedule	Monday, April 8, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:00 am – 5:00 pm: Advocacy Training & Prep Seminar (attendance is required) • 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm: Rooftop Reception Tuesday, April 9, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:00 am - 10:00 am: Breakfast and Group Meet up • 10:00 am – 5:00 pm: Meetings on Capitol Hill
More Information	cossa.org/event/2024-social-science-advocacy-day
Registration	cossa.regfox.com/2024-social-science-advocacy-day

Who Participates in Social Science Advocacy Day?

The strength of Social Science Advocacy Day is its ability to attract a broad range of participants from across the social and behavioral science community. State teams often include advocates from different institutions and disciplines/fields. This is intentional and designed to illustrate to Congress the breadth, diversity, and value of our sciences.

Attendees regularly include:

- Research faculty (tenured and early career)
- Deans, associate deans, etc.
- Directors of institutes and centers
- University administrators, such as VPRs
- Students (undergraduate and graduate)
- Staff working for scientific societies and professional associations

Important note: Social Science Advocacy Day is a benefit of COSSA membership. Therefore, this opportunity is available to individuals affiliated with a [COSSA member organization](#). If you are a member of or employed by one of COSSA's member organizations, you are eligible to participate. Don't see your organization/institution [listed](#)? Learn how you can join [here](#).

Samples Models for Participation

Many institutions and organizations return to Social Science Advocacy Day each year, either by sending the same advocate(s) or recruiting new attendees. Some have even institutionalized their process for identifying who they will send to Washington each spring. Below are a few models and strategies used by participants when deciding how they would like to participate in Social Science Advocacy Day.

- **Professional Development Opportunity** – Some deans use Social Science Advocacy Day as a professional development opportunity for faculty. They identify new participants each year as a way for faculty/researchers to learn important new skills, such as effective science communication and levers for seeking support from your elected officials. Some institutions choose to target early career faculty and/or underrepresented groups for this opportunity.
- **Rotating Participation** – Some universities choose to send a small delegation (2-4 people) to Washington each year. Oftentimes this includes one person who attended the previous year and 1-2 people who are new to the experience. The new attendees will become the veteran participant(s) the following year and bring another new person with them.
- **Student-Focused Delegations** – Several universities elect to send students to Washington, often as a small group and with a faculty member or dean. Students make wonderful advocates and policymakers truly enjoy engaging with them and hearing about why they are pursuing careers in the social and behavioral sciences.

Of course, many people decide to participate on their own and use their own resources or department/program funds to support their travel. Rest assured, those traveling alone to Washington will quickly feel welcome and part of the team.

Cost of Participation

Most of the participation cost pertains to traveling to Washington, DC. See below for a potential cost breakdown.

Cost	Estimated Price	Notes
Registration Fee	\$95 before March 3 \$125 after March 3 \$50 discount rate for students	If the registration rate is a concern, contact COSSA . Several organizations have sponsored the event, which comes with free registrations. There may be free registrations still available.
Airfare	See notes	Washington, DC airports serve as hubs for several airlines, providing affordable flight options at area airports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reagan National (DCA) – closest to meeting venue • Dulles (IAD) • Baltimore-Washington (BWI)
Lodging	Area Hotel Rates start at \$220/night Participants typically need to reserve 2 nights (suggested dates: 4/7-4/8)	A block of rooms has not been arranged since participants tend to choose a variety of lodging options. However, we provide a list of area hotel rates to assist with your decision-making. Airbnb, Vrbo, and other rental options are also available in the DC area.
Ground Transportation	Metro rates (e.g., \$2.75 from DCA to meeting venue) \$16-\$25 Cab from DCA to meeting venue	Metrorail is user friendly and convenient to the meeting venue. Cabs and ride share options are available from area hotels and airports.
Meals	\$100-\$200	Meals will be provided for the first day of the event (4/8). Participants are responsible for all other meal costs.

Past Advocate Feedback

Past participants describe their main takeaways from Social Science Advocacy Day as:

1. Congressional offices like to be asked what they need/are working on and/or are receptive to learning from social scientists.
2. Advocacy has an impact/our community can make a difference through advocacy.
3. The social and behavioral science community needs to do a better job advocating for ourselves/ advocacy is really important for our fields.
4. Relationship building with policymakers takes time and commitment.
5. COSSA is a valuable resource to its members and the social science community.

Below are direct quotes from past participants on why they participated and what they learned.

General Comments

- “Our voice as social scientists can really make a difference in policy decisions – but we have to put ourselves out there and make our work known.”
- “I participated in an advocacy day for [another organization] and it was much less well supported and I felt lost. This was more of a community, and I felt much more prepared to be successful.”
- “People on the Hill need concrete examples of how social science research matters. Thinking about how I can share with my profession how urgent it is that they think hard about the ‘broader implications’ part of their grant application BEFORE putting the project together.”
- “COSSA makes it really easy for us academics to get in the room with policymakers. I think more academics should be doing this.”
- “That we are doing a bad job of communicating our findings from government-funded research back to the government and we need to do a better job communicating back to them. There is genuine interest on their end in getting info from us.”

Would you participate again?

- “I will come back every year if my university allows! It's one of the highlights of my academic career. Makes me think differently about my work and want to get into politics.”
- “I love it. I like the connection made between social science, funding, and congress. I had no idea that this type of interaction was possible.”
- “The need is only going to be rising over time; going up to the Hill and making these types of connections is something concrete we can do to be able to mobilize against cuts in funding for social-science research and the statistical agencies.”
- “I might not have time to do this every year but I enjoy it and think it's valuable so I will certainly come again and encourage others to come also.”
- “I found the day very fulfilling, and it allowed me to see a new side of advocacy.”
- “I would love to participate again, although may instead send another person from my University so that they can have the experience.”
- “I found the experience very fulfilling. Enjoyed connecting with other social scientists and engaging with policymakers. I think I will be having follow-up meetings with my senator's staff!”
- “Having done this multiple times in the past, it is a great opportunity to hone my own pitch for social science and connect with others who want to do that too.”

How likely are you to recommend Advocacy Day to others?

- “I've already told about 10 colleagues about this day.”
- “I already told a Dean at a different campus about the rewarding experience that took place.”
- “I think it is a wonderful opportunity to engage in advocacy and use our science to advocate for funding and policy. I also really appreciated COSSA's approach in terms of facilitating relationships and asking representatives how we can be of help to them. This facilitated some great conversations about the types of data, examples of success from funding, etc. that would be helpful to our representatives as they work on policies and funding.”
- “Very glad I talked two colleagues into joining me. They both had excellent experiences as well.”
- “This was an especially wonderful experience for our very smart undergraduate.”
- “I found the experience very fulfilling. And I think other folks, especially at my university, would benefit from getting outside the Ivory Tower and engaging with folks who make policy that influences hundreds of millions of people!”

Sample Email Text

Below is text you can use when reaching out to your dean, director, supervisor, etc. about Social Science Advocacy Day.

Dear XXX:

I have been invited to participate in an important event in Washington, DC April 8-9, 2024. Our [organization/university] is a member of the Consortium of Social Science Associations ([cossa.org](https://www.cossa.org)), who hosts Social Science Advocacy Day each spring. Social Science Advocacy Day ([link](#)) brings together social and behavioral scientists and science advocates from across the country to engage with policymakers in Congress on issues important to our community, such as federal funding for research at agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, among others. It is COSSA's signature annual event focused on putting social and behavioral science front and center before Congress.

As a participant, I would join other scholars from across our state in a day of in-person meetings with our state's representatives in the House of Representatives and Senate. During the meetings we will have the opportunity to discuss our own research and other research efforts happening at the university, with an overarching goal of advocating for increased federal funding for social and behavioral science research.

According to COSSA and past participants in this event, I can expect to:

- *Learn how federal funding and policy impact social and behavioral science research at the university level.*
- *Learn how to communicate with policymakers and discuss research in ways that is helpful to them.*
- *Gain visibility for the [institution/organization] and our research activities.*
- *Connect with social and behavioral science researchers and professionals from across the country and across fields.*
- *Learn a unique set of skills that I can bring to my work (e.g., teaching, research, advocacy, service, etc.).*

Costs associated with the trip include a small registration fee, airfare, lodging for 2 nights, and a few incidentals (meals for 1 day and ground transportation).

I would be happy to provide additional information, including testimonials from past participants.

Contact

Have additional questions about Social Science Advocacy Day? Contact Wendy Naus, COSSA Executive Director, at wnaus@cosa.org.