



2023 Congressional Startup Day & Startup Advocacy Week Toolkit

ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL STARTUP DAY

Thank you for joining us for [Congressional Startup Day & Startup Advocacy Week](#)! We at Engine know that startups are essential for economic growth, and are oftentimes deeply rooted in the communities they occupy. Fostering a community also means connecting with congressional leaders in the varying districts and states. Right now, Members of Congress are particularly focused on the technology sector, but it is critical they hear from the startups they represent about how public policy decisions are impacting them.

Congressional Startup Day is an opportunity for senators and representatives to experience the innovation and entrepreneurship taking place among their constituents, and through these discussions, we hope to strengthen the relationship between lawmakers and the hardworking entrepreneurs driving our economy. Throughout Startup Advocacy Week, the week of August 14th-18th, Engine helps federal policymakers meet with members of the startup ecosystem from their state or district. We have facilitated over 170 meetings between startups and members of Congress as part of Congressional startup day since 2018. And this year, Rep. Jamaal Bowman (NY.) is serving as co-chair of Congressional Startup Day.

HOW YOU CAN PREPARE FOR A CONGRESSIONAL STARTUP DAY MEETING

- Prepare yourself with [our guide](#) walking through the steps to effectively engage with policymakers
- Consult our policy primers or reach out to us for additional background on policy issues that you might like to discuss with your representative
- Familiarize yourself with what participation has [looked like](#) in the past
- Here are some other ideas and questions to think about in preparation for a meeting or roundtable discussion with policymakers:
 - These meetings are, above all else, a chance for you to tell your policymakers—who ultimately work for YOU—about your startup!



- We know you're busy running your businesses, and we don't expect you to dedicate an inordinate amount of time studying for these meetings.
- Always start meetings with policymakers with your name, where you're based (if not currently there), the name of your company, and a short, elevator pitch of what your startup does.
- What does your platform or startup provide that isn't found elsewhere? (or, asked another way, why did you build your corner of the web?)
- What are the challenges that stopped you from growing how you wanted to?
- What are the successes you are most proud of?
- What is the state of your local startup ecosystem? What are the factors contributing to its growth or contraction?

HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

- Submit your comments, photos, videos, and experiences from any meetings with policymakers to startupday@engine.is
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor to your local newspaper sharing the importance of policymakers keeping startup founders in mind when crafting new laws
- Share on social media with these hashtags: #CSD #CongressionalStartupDay #StartupAdvocacyWeek
- Spread the word using the social media templates included below



BACKGROUND ON THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

- Over 99 percent of U.S. businesses are considered small (less than 500 employees). [[SBA](#)]
- There were 32.5 million startups and small businesses in the U.S. last year. These firms employed 61.2 million Americans, or 46.8 percent of U.S. employees. [[SBA](#)]
- Startups that were less than one year old created approximately 3 million jobs in 2021. [[Statista](#)]
- America is the global leader of startup ecosystems. Half of the ten best startup ecosystems are located within the United States. [[Startup Genome](#)] And almost half (48 percent) of new companies are being established outside of the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. [[TechNet and Progressive Policy Institute](#)]
- Access to startup funding remains a major concern for U.S. entrepreneurs; 55 percent said it was the most significant barrier to launching a new company. [[Start Us Up](#)]
- Sixty-five percent of entrepreneurs rely on personal and family savings for startup capital. Only half a percent of entrepreneurs get to utilize venture capital funding. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]
- Underrepresented founders are disproportionately hurt by the cost of and lack of access to capital. Approximately 16 percent of businesses owned by underrepresented founders report profits being negatively impacted by the cost and lack of access. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]
- Immigrant entrepreneurs account 21.7 percent of all business owners in the U.S., a disproportionately larger share than their size of the U.S. population or labor force. [[New American Economy](#)]
- Startups are the driving force behind most new job creation in the United States. From 2010 to 2020, startups accounted for approximately 30 percent of employment gains in the U.S. each year. [[Congressional Research Office](#)]
- Women founders and entrepreneurs of color play a significant and growing role in new business creation:
 - In 2019, an average of 1,817 female-owned firms were launched each day. Eighty-nine percent of these companies were owned by women of color. [[State of Women-Owned Businesses 2019](#)]
 - Studies show that diverse teams produce better financial returns and more innovation: racially and gender diverse teams are 33 percent and 21 percent more likely to be profitable than their less-diverse peer teams, respectively. The diversity of a company's leadership correlates to increased innovation, measured by the revenue attributable to new products and services. And innovative companies whose leaders exhibit inherent and acquired diversity are likelier to capture new market share and report market share growth. [[Making the Startup Ecosystem More Equitable](#)]
 - African-American entrepreneurship increased 39 percent from 2016 to 2017. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Twitter:

- I'm meeting up with [@ policymaker] to share [startup name]'s story and advocate for [issue of interest] during this year's #CongressionalStartupDay!
 - Consider adding a photo from the meeting.
- Startups are the lifeblood of our economy, and I'm thrilled to join @EngineOrg for this year's #StartupAdvocacyWeek! Learn how to be a voice for your own innovation, and our startup ecosystem as a whole: <https://bit.ly/3hq2kzu>
- With thousands of startups across the country, the U.S. thrives on innovation. And it's important that policymakers continue to support the startup ecosystem. That's why I'm celebrating #CongressionalStartupDay with [@repname]. Join us: <https://bit.ly/3hq2kzu>
- Startup businesses are creating millions of jobs across the United States. I'm excited to participate in #StartupAdvocacyWeek and support our nation's important economic drivers. <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day>
- Startups are innovating in every state across the nation. @[STARTUP] in [CITY] is just one incredible org contributing to our local economy. #StartupsEverywhere #CongressionalStartupDay #StartupAdvocacyWeek
- Startups & small businesses created almost three million U.S. jobs last year. This #CongressionalStartupDay, I want to celebrate how startups drive our nation's economic growth and technological innovation.

LinkedIn:

- I'm speaking with [@ policymaker] to advocate for [issue of interest] during this year's #CongressionalStartupDay! Learn more about how you can connect with policymakers in your district or state to support innovation across the country: <https://bit.ly/3hq2kzu>
- Startups and small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, and it's imperative organizations have what they need to thrive. I'm thrilled to join Engine | Advocacy & Foundation for this year's #StartupAdvocacyWeek! Learn how you can be a voice for your own innovation, and our startup ecosystem as a whole, here: <https://bit.ly/3hq2kzu>
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Facebook:

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MEETING AGENDAS

We welcome startups and lawmakers to work out the finer details of the meetings, including format and discussion topics. Meetings generally run 30-60 minutes and have included town hall-style discussions, demo days, office and space walkthroughs, and more freewheeling conversations. We encourage all participating offices and startups to connect with one another in advance of the meeting to discuss any specific meeting logistics. We recommend capping any roundtable discussions at around 10 people to ensure each participant has an opportunity to actively participate.

Because of the pandemic, we also offer the opportunity for startups and lawmakers to hold remote meetings via Zoom, Google Hangouts, or other video conferencing services. Some organizations have limitations on which conferencing tools they can use, so please confirm those details before setting up a virtual meeting. In order to minimize any technical difficulties on the day of the meeting, we also ask that startups share the meeting call-in information with the congressional office ahead of the virtual meeting. We have provided sample agendas below that have proven useful for in-person and virtual meetings (although do not feel compelled to use this as the template for your meeting).

Sample In-Person Agenda

- 2:00 p.m. Welcome and introductions
To include: history of company, number of employees, product overview
- 2:10 p.m. Tour of facility
To include: introductions to relevant staff
- 2:30 p.m. Startup Q&A session
To include: discuss startup experience, policies that help and hurt, topics such as broadband access, capital, talent.
- 2:55 p.m. Photos
- 3:00 p.m. Event concludes

Sample Virtual Agenda

- 11:00 a.m. Welcome and introductions (from startup founders)
To include: introduce participants, history of company, product overview.
- 11:10 a.m. Introductory remarks from lawmakers
To include: why startups are important, congressional support for entrepreneurship.
- 11:15 a.m. Startup participant intro and Q&A session
To include: discuss startup experience, policies that help and hurt, topics such as broadband access, capital, talent.
- 11:45 a.m. Event concludes, any closing remarks



ABOUT ENGINE

Engine is a non-profit technology policy, research, and advocacy organization that bridges the gap between policymakers and startups. Engine works with government and a community of thousands of high-technology, growth-oriented startups across the nation to support the development of technology entrepreneurship through economic research, policy analysis, and advocacy on local and national issues.

