Importance of Government Relations in a COVID-19 Environment

- Maintaining strong relationships with NPS and your Congressional delegation is always important, but in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s more vital than ever.
- **Building Relationships:** As a locally based Friends Group or park partner, you have the advantage of on-the-ground, field-based knowledge, and are often the first to hear of news or issues in/around your park and gateway community.
  - Congressional offices deeply value your local insights and expertise.
  - If you don’t have existing relationships with your park’s Congressional delegation, they may take some time to develop.
  - NPF’s GR team is happy to help with introductions and is here to assist in developing relationships over time.
    - Note: In addition to a member’s DC-based staff, it is beneficial to establish relationships with their state or district office staff.
- **Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans:** Have you applied for a PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan or EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan) advance?
  - While these programs have been overwhelmed, importantly, 501(c)(3) organizations were specifically made part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.
  - To secure relief via these programs, it is helpful (but not required) to work directly with a bank that has a relationship with the SBA.
  - We have heard that credit unions have also been helpful in pushing these loans and grants through.
  - Notify your Congressional delegation if you have applied for any of these loans or grants, and if you have been turned down for any reason.
  - For more information please visit this [SBA link](#) or contact NPF’s GR team.
- **Economic Impact:** Understanding and messaging the economic impact of your organization (i.e. the number of jobs you support, both direct and indirect, and your impact on the local economy) is an important part of telling your story.
  - These insights are key to illustrating your value, obtaining SBA resources, and receiving support (as needed) from elected officials.
  - Take the time to gather this information to inform your GR outreach. Having topline data at your fingertips will save time when creating materials in the future.
  - Be prepared to share how many employees rely on your organization, and how many jobs (again, direct and indirect) you support in your community.
  - Provide examples of your organization’s impact (economic or otherwise). Examples might include a recently completed project or fundraising campaign, volunteer programs, collaborations with local schools/partners to host educational field trips, etc.
  - In addition to sharing what you do and why it matters, be prepared to speak to how your organization has navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and what your current or future needs may be.
  - Members care deeply about their constituents and the wellbeing of organizations in their states and districts. Do not hesitate to voice your organization’s needs to those who can help!