

Making the Case for the Renter Tax Credit Using Motivational Interviewing (MI) Techniques



Motivational Interviewing technique examples using the Renter Tax Credit

Core Skills: OARS	Open-Ended, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries
<p>Open questions: focus and deepen movement toward change with the open-ended questions</p>	<p><i>Why did you get started in public service? Why does the Representative/Senator support X?</i></p> <p><i>What types of policy issues relating to poverty in the districts are you passionate about?</i></p> <p><i>Who does the Representative/Senator look to for more information about the Renter Tax Credit?</i></p> <p><i>What can the Representative/Senator do to help lift people out of poverty via the tax code? What specific legislation have they been following that would aide in that effort?</i></p> <p><i>Has the Representative/Senator looked at what some states are doing on Renter Tax Credits? There are some states that have this mechanism in place to help with high housing costs.</i></p> <p><i>How can we help the Representative/Senator to support X?</i></p> <p><i>What do you find positive about the Renter Tax Credit?</i></p>
<p>Affirmations: spotlight their skills, abilities, successes, and reasons for hope.</p>	<p><i>"I, and our constituents, really appreciate the actions you've taken on the X. We appreciate that..."</i></p>
<p>Reflections: reflect both their thoughts and feelings, both stated and implied.</p>	<p><i>"When you said X, it reminded me of the value and importance of..."</i></p>
<p>Summaries: Review what's been said, capturing where we are going and why.</p>	<p><i>"So, to summarize, I understand that the Representative/Senator..."</i></p>

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<p>Techniques to help with Resistance</p>	<p><i>Below are some examples of how to deal with resistance from members of Congress when discussing the Renter Tax Credit.</i></p>
<p>Colombo Method: Express your confusion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect their view and the discrepant facts as you know them 2. Ask for their help resolving the confusion 	<p>Possible responses when the opposition is that there are already existing programs in place to address affordable housing crisis:</p> <p><i>Skyrocketing rental costs have simply become so burdensome that even renters who are working hard cannot keep up. Many households pay well over 30 percent of their income in rent, meaning they are “rent-burdened.” Being rent-burdened means making impossible choices between food, heat, medical care, and a roof over your head. Most rent-burdened households cannot access existing housing programs, though, which target support to specific groups like people experiencing homelessness. Do you think a Renter Tax Credit can broadly reach those who are living paycheck to paycheck or those households who are one financial shock away from homelessness and poverty?</i></p> <p><i>There is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing the affordable housing and homelessness crises. Congress provides modest funding for conventional housing assistance and homelessness programs. But these programs are inaccessible and are only provided to a small segment of the population who meet certain eligibility requirements, are not enough to meet the needs of all those eligible, and do not reflect the diverse housing needs of our country. For example, when only 1 in 4 eligible renter households can get federal rental assistance, renters are essentially entering a lottery to get help. Likewise, several states use their existing tax codes to help renters, but their policies and existing patchwork of other related benefits are insufficient to broadly address the affordable housing crisis nationwide. Do you believe we should have additional tools that help and benefit financially struggling renter households?</i></p> <p><i>Possible response when the opposition is that the renter tax credit will only contribute to inflation or higher rents:</i></p>

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	<p><i>I understand your concerns about landlords raising rents or the tax credit contributing to inflation. We can have our policy staff circle back to you for more information. But inflation has multiple causes and a renter tax credit can be applied immediately to cover rent and housing expenses. when landlords set prices, whether someone gets the credit is not the primary factor that would drive up the cost. Landlords and property managers look at vacancy rates first and whether the tenant can pay the rent, not what the tenant brings to the table in terms of additional tax credits for which they are eligible for.</i></p>
<p>Reflect: Show interest and understanding of their perspective and values.</p>	<p><i>"I understand the Representative's/Senator's hesitancy around supporting a federal Renter Tax Credit because of the possibility of raising rents further or it contributing to inflation. I respect that. I also don't want rents to rise further, but struggling households still need help. There are different dials and elements of a federal Renter Tax Credit that can reduce likelihood of inflationary effects.</i></p> <p><i>I want to see a federal Renter Tax Credit, because it can make a difference to those who are unable to access existing housing and homelessness programs. It can PREVENT housing instability and homelessness, which are big problems in my community.</i></p> <p><i>We support efforts to increase affordable housing supply, but households would have to wait several years if not decades before realizing the benefits of affordable units from an increased housing supply, a luxury that many people do not have. When households experience housing insecurity, the solution they ask for is one that would immediately help them with affordability, not having to apply for a program with copious rules, regulations, and a long waitlist, nor is it helpful to be told they have to wait until they are on the streets or in a shelter before they can receive assistance.</i></p>
<p>Ask them to explain their view: This will reveal any knowledge gaps.</p>	<p><i>"Can you explain your position on the Renter Tax Credit? Do you know if any of your colleagues are champions on the Renter Tax Credit?"</i></p>