



Guide to Hosting Elected Representatives

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Preparing for the Site Visit

The best time to introduce elected officials and policy makers to your business and your stance on important issues is before you need their support. This guide will help in preparing you to for the visit and help to guide your objectives and create a productive meeting.

Why Site Visits?

The attractions industry provides 1.3 million non-exportable jobs and is a \$219 billion dollar industry. The industry helps boost the state economy and tourism, all while adding to community development. Having elected officials, policy makers, community leaders, and their staff visit your facility will help them to understand how their actions are crucial for the success of your business and the community.

Preparation

The preparation for a site visit is a key to its success. There are several elements that you need to address when planning and preparing.

1. Purpose
2. Attendees
3. Message
4. Presentation

NEAAPA Tip: Ethics Compliance

Different jurisdictions have different ethics and reporting laws. Ask NEAAPA for help when planning your event before inviting any elected representative.

Purpose

There are three main reasons to host a site visit:

1. To inform about how your business operates and the community benefits provided
2. To educate on issues that are impacting your business, both negative and positive, as well as the entire industry.
3. To promote a new initiative, attraction, or addition to your business.

Each of these reasons has distinct outcomes that you should prepare for and be ready to communicate. Elected representatives and policy makers need to take away a clear understanding of what they can do to help and what policies can benefit your business and the industry. Understanding and clear messaging are essential and are gained through thorough preparation.

Attendees

The people that you ask to attend your site visit should have a direct correlation to the message and goals that you are conveying. Keeping this in mind, below are some categories that you should consider, depending on the issue.

- Local Issues: Town or city council, county supervisors, local and county regulators, school board (if necessary), community leaders.
- State Issues: State house/assembly and senate members, including those in leadership.
- Federal Issues: Members of the US House and Senate that represent your state
- Specific Policy Issues (Federal or State): Members of the committee that have jurisdiction over the issue.

Once you have identified who best to contact for your specific goal, you can find out who your elected representatives are by going to:

<https://usa.gov/elected-officials>

This website will direct to your federal, state, and local representatives, as well as provide the contact information for their district offices.

NEAAPA Tip:

It is important to make sure legislative and/or regulatory staff are in attendance also and to directly engage them in the issues you are trying to address. Many times, they are the key to make sure the message is received by policymakers.

Inviting Elected Representatives

The request to schedule the visit itself is easy to do:

1. Engage the scheduler early, you will most likely need to adapt to the elected representative's schedule.
2. Do not directly contact the representative until you have verified the schedule with the scheduler.
3. Duplication and follow-up are essential. Be sure to include key staff members, such as the Chief of Staff or Legislative Director.
4. Call the elected official, send a hard copy, and confirm the appointment multiple times. Don't forget to include the Scheduler or Chief of Staff when confirming the appointment.

Message

The purpose of the site visit will help to determine the message that you need to convey. Additionally, it will help define the information you need to compile to convey the message.

Your Role in the Community

Some examples can be:

- How many jobs your business provides, what type of people are employed (full-time, part-time, etc.)
- How much you pay in sales, employment, property, and other taxes.
- Benefits that you offer in the community (philanthropy, fundraising, etc.)
- Additional offerings that you provide in the community.

Issues Impacting Your Business

Examine your business model and think about how the issue you're addressing will impact your business. Think well-rounded and consider all aspects:

- What this means to sales, and therefore tax income?
- What will this mean for payroll, and therefore employment?
- What will this mean for your ability to hold fundraisers and support charity?
- What will this mean for business growth, and therefore the ability to expand?

Promote New Initiatives, Attractions, or Programs

New initiatives require an understanding of the community and its needs. New is different, which brings challenges and opposition if not handled carefully. The key is to engage opinion leaders early, getting them to understand the purpose early on and garner support before any opposition mounts. In this case, the important aspect isn't numbers but vision:

- Include information about what your new program can do.
- Include how the new program applies to your overall mission.
- Identify ways in which the new program can assist the community.
- Identify the economics of the new program and how it impacts the overall business.

Presentation

Your business is the site where you can showcase how important operations are to the well-being of the community. "Behind the scenes" tours are extremely interesting to those who have never seen them and should be incorporated into the visit if possible.

To enhance your presentation, prepare engaging material to hand out to participants. This will create a lasting impression and ensure your message resonates with policymakers long after their visit ends. These materials may provide more detailed information about your goals or can provide a visual aid of numbers, charts, and statistics that back up your claims and promote your goals. NEAAPA offers resources that may be helpful to you.

The Visit

With adequate preparation the visit should go smoothly and leave you feeling confident that your needs have been heard and are being seriously considered. Remember:

- Always stay positive.
- Be flexible with timing – schedules can and do change, sometimes at the last moment.
- Encourage participation and questions – dialogue and interaction engage your visitors with the experience.
- Make sure the staff is prepped and ready so they can give the elected representative potential questions and insights into the business and process.
- Consider if it is appropriate to allow the elected representative to address the group.

NEAAPA Tip: Contingencies

It is important to have a contingency plan ready. While you can't plan for everything, planning scenarios such as scheduling issues, inclement weather, or emergencies – and creating a place will make your event run smoother.

Follow Up

Following up with elected representatives after their visit to your facility is crucial in reinforcing your message and establishing a good relationship into the future.

- Thank the elected representative for visiting and offer to follow up.
- Offer any follow up information to the representative and their staff.
- Include any follow up information that was requested at the event.
- Encourage a follow up discussion with the representative and their staff.
- If appropriate, identify times for any additional meetings that are necessary.
- Include any photographs taken at the event that would reinforce the visit to the elected representative.

Create an experience that establishes a connection to your business, your advocacy, and your issues.

Continue to cultivate the relationship:

- Schedule a meeting at the capital during Legislative sessions, either on your own or as part of an organized event.
- Attend town hall meetings and other in-district events.
- Consider organizing a fundraiser for the representative, or volunteering for their campaign.
- Stay in contact through email or phone calls to give a business perspective on current policy issues.

Sample Site Visit Agenda

Activity	Lead by
<p>Arrival & Registration <i>Food and interaction with other attendees</i></p>	Staff
<p>Welcome Address <i>Brief opening remarks about the day, purpose, and issues</i></p>	CEO/President
<p>Optional Address by Invited Representatives <i>Opening comments by elected representatives</i></p>	Elected Representative
<p>Facility Tour "Behind the scenes" tour of the facility offering the CEO/President opportunities to interact personally with elected representatives while the Operations Manager details the efforts and programs of the facility, including relevant potential threats to the facility if the issue progresses.</p>	Operations Manager or Designated Staff Member
<p>Discussion Reconvening on the purpose of the event, discussion items based on the event, and a call to action for attendees to support future success. Distribution of take-home materials regarding the purpose.</p>	CEO/President
<p>Closing Remarks Final remarks on the event, and discussion of the next steps to ensure further success.</p>	CEO/President
<p>Adjourn Make sure to engage and thank all of the attendees, ensure that they have all of the information they need. Invite a follow up discussion and introductions for best answers on given questions, encourage further interaction if possible.</p>	All Staff

Proper Salutations

When addressing elected representatives either in person or in writing, it is important to remember which titles are appropriate and expected. Using the appropriate title will continue to foster a relationship or mutual respect and help you to reach your intended goal.

Title	Letter/Envelope	Salutation / Complimentary Close
Senator	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Senator (Last Name)
U.S. Representative	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Representative (Last Name)
Committee Chair	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Mr/Madam Chair
Attorney General	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear General (Last Name)
Presidential Cabinet (Secretary or Administrator)	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Secretary (Last Name) or Dear Administrator (Last Name)
Governor	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Governor (Last Name)
State Senator	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Senator (Last Name)
State Representative, Assemblyperson, or Delegate	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Representative Delegate OR Assemblyman/woman (Last Name)
Mayor	Honorable (Full Name)	Dear Mayor (Last Name)

Site Visit Checklist

Before the Visit:

- ___ Identify invitees
- ___ Write invitations
- ___ Prepare agenda
- ___ Send invitations with agenda
- ___ Compile research on the issue, including background information
- ___ Prepare and test remarks
- ___ Prepare take-away material for attendees
- ___ Secure event materials (i.e.: food, seating, A/V equipment)
- ___ Alert press if appropriate
- ___ Develop appropriate contingency plans and advise staff
- ___ Confirm speakers
- ___ Brief and prepare elected representatives' staff
- ___ Facility walkthrough and contingency plan check
- ___ Final briefing for staff – attire, conduct, expectations, questions
- ___ Prepare sign-in sheet or other contact capture method for attendees

During the Visit

- ___ Make sure to obtain everyone's contact information
- ___ Interact with attendees and encourage participation
- ___ Invite opportunities to interact with the operations of the facility
- ___ Invite questions and comments
- ___ Encourage follow up
- ___ Emphasis on the 'asking' portion of the event
- ___ Thank all attendees for their time, attendance, and participation

After the Visit

- ___ Send thank you notes
- ___ Send follow up information as requested
- ___ Tell NEAAPA about the meeting