

# ECA SHOW FLOOR ADVOCACY PROGRAM HANDBOOK



**EXHIBITIONS &  
CONFERENCES**  
ALLIANCE

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance (ECA) is a coalition of leading professional, industry, and labor associations dedicated to the advancement of the face-to-face business events industry. As the voice of the business events industry in Washington, D.C. and nationwide, ECA advocates on behalf of its alliance partners and the industry at-large.

In support of ECA's advocacy on Capitol Hill and in state houses and city halls across the country, it is vital for industry stakeholders to make their voices heard on key issues. This is why ECA has created the Show Floor Advocacy Program!

The Show Floor Advocacy Program is designed to empower industry leaders and advocates to host policymakers at events in their district, city, or state. This will allow you to educate them on the important issues that impact the business events industry while showing them first-hand how our industry operates, and the impact we have on economic growth, job creation, and supporting small businesses.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Policymakers are typically generalists. They may have experience in one or two specific industries, but they rely on their staff, government affairs professionals, and most importantly, constituents to help them understand how other industries work and how proposed legislation and regulations will impact those industries.

For policymakers to champion the business events industry's priorities, it is important for them to see up close and personal how our industry operates and see the impact that we have in their backyard and on the broader economy. This is why the Show Floor Advocacy Program focuses on empowering industry leaders like you to host policymakers at exhibitions, conferences, and other business events to show them first-hand what goes into setting up, managing, and operating an event of that magnitude.

It cannot be stressed enough that your voice as a constituent and community leader, and as a member of our dynamic industry, will carry tremendous weight when it comes to educating policymakers on ECA's top policy priorities. Your voice can make a real difference in policy outcomes that will ultimately impact your business, your colleagues, and the broader industry.

## HOW YOU BENEFIT

Being part of the ECA Show Floor Advocacy Program will allow you to be on the front lines of ECA's advocacy efforts. By hosting policymakers and educating them about how they can help advance our industry, you will be able to directly impact the outcome of legislation and regulations that could either positively or negatively impact our industry and your organization.

With your help, ECA can continue to effectively advocate on behalf of the industry and encourage policymakers to champion and support our policy priorities. Direct lobbying in Washington isn't enough. Your involvement will help policymakers better understand the ins and outs of our industry and show them why they should stand up for the important work that you do every single day in their community.

Not only will you continue to be viewed as a leader within our industry, but you will be able to make a difference for yourself, your business, and your friends and colleagues across the country.

# HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

ECA has designed the Show Floor Advocacy Program to be simple and easy to be a part of. Below you will find the process for participating, but we also invite you to sign up for our Show Floor Advocacy Alerts, which will officially sign you up for the program and keep you in the loop on everything going on with ECA and the Show Floor Advocacy Program. We will be reaching out to folks who sign up with opportunities as they arise in your Congressional district, city, and state to potentially invite policymakers to events.

## PROCESS:

If you haven't signed up for ECA's Show Floor Advocacy Alerts, no problem! By following the process below, you can take part in the Show Floor Advocacy Program and help ECA advance the policy priorities of the business events industry wherever you are from coast to coast:

### 1. INFORM ECA OF A PROSPECTIVE INVITE

Whether you have already invited a policymaker on your own, know of an upcoming event in your area that you'd like to invite a policymaker to, or would like to explore options for events to invite a policymaker to, informing ECA of your interest in being part of the Show Floor Advocacy Program is the first step in the process. You can use the Show Floor Advocacy Program report form to alert ECA to a potential invitation opportunity, and a member of the ECA team will reach out to you ASAP with next steps.

### 2. SEND THE INVITATION

After you have reached out to ECA, we will work with you to craft an invitation to the targeted policymaker and their staff. It is important that the invitation be well-written and delivered in a timely manner to allow her/his staff to block off that timeframe on their calendar. Policymakers are very busy, so the typical invitation should be sent 1-2 months prior to the date of your event.

### 3. PREPARATION CALL

If the policymaker accepts your invitation, the next step in the process would be a preparation call with ECA staff. ECA will invite all advocates and industry leaders who will be attending the meeting to go over detail and share best practices and lessons learned from previous Show Floor Advocacy Program meetings. This will likely include policy issues to discuss, a run of show for the meeting, how to best greet and engage the policymaker, and more.



#### 4. RECEIVE SHOW FLOOR MATERIALS

Prior to the event, you will receive everything you need from ECA including policy talking points, educational materials for the policymaker, and other items that will be helpful for your meeting on the show floor.

#### 5. HOLD THE MEETING

After the preparation with ECA, it will be time to host your Show Floor Advocacy Program meeting! You can learn more about how to go about hosting policymakers in the section titled “What to expect on the Show Floor” later in the handbook.

#### 6. THANK YOU FOLLOW-UP

After your meeting, it is important to send your policymaker a follow-up email thanking them for making the time and meeting with you at the event. This will help build a rapport with the office and keep the door open for future conversations with them and their staff on the issues you brought up during your meeting.

#### 7. SUBMIT A POST-MEETING REPORT

After your meeting with the policymaker, it is important to let ECA staff know how your meeting went. What issues did you discuss? What comments did the policymaker make throughout the meeting? These questions are important as ECA looks to continue the conversation with the policymaker and their staff and move them to support our industry and policy asks.



## WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE SHOW FLOOR

Meeting with policymakers can seem like a daunting task, but they want to hear from you! As an expert in your industry (and a voter!), they need to hear your perspective on important policy issues to help them make informed decisions.

The following items are important to remember when hosting a policymaker at an event as part of the Show Floor Advocacy Program:

- **Greeting the Policymaker** – Make sure to greet the policymaker and their staff as they arrive at the venue. It is very important to introduce yourself, and any other advocates participating in the meeting, so that they know and recognize who will be engaging with them. Making the policymaker and their staff feel comfortable and welcome will help the meeting start off on the right foot.
- **Experiencing Our Industry** – Showing the policymaker what we do first-hand is very important. Show the official and their staff the event being set up, the various elements of the booth set up, the overall event space, and any other elements of the event that you think are important. This will help them better understand what goes into setting up and managing an event of this magnitude. If the policymaker visits once the event begins, offer the opportunity to connect with exhibitors, attendees, and constituents, or even give remarks if applicable. ECA can help you plan those elements with the policymaker's office prior to the event.
- **Discussion of Policy Priorities** – As you show the official around the event space, policy discussions will organically occur. But don't forget to also set time aside afterwards to discuss ECA's policy priorities. It is important that the policymaker hear from you on the issues are impacting your business and the industry, as well as hear about how our industry impacts their district, state, and the broader U.S. economy.
- **Taking Photos** – Be sure to pose for a photo with the policymaker! Not only will this help ECA promote your advocacy efforts, but policymakers love taking photos with constituents and stakeholders to share on their own social media profiles and in their newsletters. (Don't forget to get their permission first.)

# THANK YOU

Thank you for being an ECA advocate and making your voice heard on behalf of the business events industry. With your help, ECA will continue to be able to advocate for policies that will help advance our industry for years to come.

By being part of the Show Floor Advocacy Program, you will make a huge impact on policy outcomes by educating policymakers on how important our industry is to their constituents and the country at-large. We are America's small businesses, supporting America's small businesses... and with your help, we will show policymakers why they need to support you, your business, and the broader industry!

