

# 2025 NGEDA STATE ASSOCIATION CORPORATE PARTNER RECOMMENDATION WHITE PAPER

## Purpose

This is a recommendation document. This is not a requirements document. The intent is to provide Association Presidents and Executive Directors (ED) with insight and “best practices” gathered by key Industry Leaders participation in a broader selection of association conferences and events than would be practical for any individual State Association President or Executive Director (ED) to attend. This document should be seen as a guide for any Association on how to create and cultivate a more successful partnership with Industry.

## Background

Executive Directors (ED) of each state have limited opportunities to attend conferences outside of their own annual conference. It is challenging for an ED to evaluate the quality of their industry partnerships as they have little reference for comparison. It may therefore be difficult to understand how to develop or enhance these industry relationships beyond what is traditional for a given association. This is not just a “beginners” problem. It is important to realize that even the most experienced ED’s whose conferences many consider “The Best” can still be susceptible to complacency and may have room to improve.

The relationship between Industry and a State National Guard (and its non-profit Association) is a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership. The State Associations benefit from Industry insight, capability gap solutions, research, and monetary donations. These donations help fund military balls, team building activities, legislative activities, and conferences. Industry benefits from the relationship with the Association’s members from touch points with decision makers, program managers, and end level users to demonstrate technology (or services) they have that will support that State’s mission or fill capability gaps. It is a relationship where everyone can walk away with what they need—if it is done well. It is important to note, that many companies that conduct business with the military don’t just do it for the money. Many companies consider it a privilege to be able to serve and partner with the people that protect our Nation. In this way, National Guard relationships are more meaningful as often we sponsor states in which we live, work or have family—reinforcing the industry’s involvement in a partnership that supports the “home team.”

## Sponsorships And Partnerships

### DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS OVER PARTICIPATION.

Most States allow companies to set up a booth display even if they are not Corporate Partners/Sponsors, which is great and a normal practice across the 54 States and Territories. If you want to change these random *participating* companies into committed-repeat *sponsors*, the companies need to see industry sponsors getting additional benefits that they would want. Some examples of the benefits State Associations offer to partnering or sponsoring companies are:

- a. X number of Conference Registrations
- b. X number of participant fees for Golf or Shooting events
- c. Single, Double or Triple Booth Space
- d. X number of Complimentary Hotel Rooms (X nights)
- e. Recognition at Corporate Reception (Thursday evening)
- f. VIP Table seating at Saturday night Banquet
- g. Full/Half page advertisement in the Annual Conference Program
- h. Invitation to Special Association events and receptions
- i. Special invitation to Adjutant General's reception on Friday night of the Annual Conference
- j. Opportunity to network with State Leadership at Exhibitors Reception during the Annual Conference
- k. Advertisement in the Association's newsletter
- l. X number of membership wide emails per year highlighting your partnership
- m. Company name inscribed on plaque displayed at the entrance of the National Guard Association office
- n. Scrolling link on all pages of the website
- o. Link on website and logo in publications
- p. Lapel Pin
- q. License to use State Association logo on company publications
- r. Special event via video teleconference to discuss your products with key leaders
- s. Corporate banner or image mounted in the Hospitality Suite at the NGAUS General Conference

### PARTNERSHIP NAMES AND BENEFITS

**NAMING.** Just as is necessary when encouraging *participating industry* to become *partnering industry*, if you want to turn the smaller or low-level sponsors/donors into larger donors, the benefits need to be clearly shown between the sponsorship/partnership levels. These levels and their naming conventions should also make logical sense. As an example, if you have a program called "**The Champions of Corporate Partnership**", and three donation levels under that, make sure they are all named clearly.

For example:

The **Lightweight Level** at a \$XXX minimum donation,  
the **Midweight Level** at a \$XXX minimum donation, and  
the **Heavyweight Level** at a \$XXX minimum donation.



It could be problematic to name one level “**The Champion Level**”, because that could cause confusion and hurt feelings. [“I thought all Champions were invited to the exclusive TAG Meet and Greet” when the company only gave you \$500.00.] Your donors, especially the top tiers, should feel very special.

**DONATION AMOUNTS.** This can be a touchy subject but let us address this directly. The amounts that State Associations charge range from \$250.00 for a small business/\$350.00 for a nonprofit up to \$15,000.00. A slim majority of State Associations start at \$500.00 with the next at \$1000.00 (as of 2025). Many States list their levels on their websites so you should research and consider what your Association can offer to potential Corporate Partners. Starting with a lower “base” level will allow new companies to display at your conference, and potentially “level-up” when they see higher tiered partners happy with the benefits provided. Having a higher base level will bring you more funds immediately but may price out new companies or keep companies from renewing.

**BENEFITS.** Higher levels of sponsorship/partnership should lead to increased touch points or guaranteed access to centers of influence within a given State. **This is not meant to be unethical. Industry understands that “Access” does not translate to sales/money, but limited “access” is generally seen as limited “opportunity”.** Some examples of increased “access” or touchpoints are:

- a. Thursday or Friday night preconference dinner or happy hour with TAG and Senior Leaders. *(And do not hesitate to turn away companies who do not pay for this access.)*
- b. Trade show visits from TAG and Senior Leaders.
- c. The ED requests a list of who the Company would like to see and brings them to the donor for a quick visit. Use your Association board for this, or ask junior officers to assist. Giving the attendee a quick intro to the sponsor is very important—so know your donors!
- d. Top donors could be allowed to speak at key times during the conference, or at mealtimes.
- e. Banners and signage with your top donors give those companies visibility. Placing them in the actual conference room allows reinforcement of the company names. **Ask your partners to provide a certain sized banner or backdrop—even the small businesses have them—so all the State must do is place them. This saves you money.**
- f. If you opt to pay for new banners and signage each year, make sure that the logo sizes of each donor on each tier is the same, with the top donors having the biggest logos.
- g. Corporate Partners should get great booth locations—and **your top level, the best locations** near the entrances, on corners and next to food and drinks.
- h. All Association newsletters, emails and websites should include top donor websites or POCs—or at least rotate them if you have many.

- i. Social Media or Website listings give visibility--appreciating a company that Partners with you fosters community so monitor Partners' social and repost/tag/like what you can.
- j. If the state has a Senior Leadership conference, invite only partnered or top donors.
- k. If the state has a Vendor or Industry Day conference, invite only partnered or top donors.
- l. Recognize top donors on a Fun Run t-shirt.
- m. Highest level donors could be given 3 minutes to pitch the TAG or appropriate Senior Leader. (And do not be afraid to be strict with Industry. Three minutes is THREE MINUTES unless the TAG or Senior Leader extends.)

## THE CONFERENCE/ANNUAL MEETING

TAG and Senior Leader support is required for successful industry partnerships. It is important to get your state's leaders on board early, and make sure they are visible at the conference. Industry is aware that they are not the TAG's top priority on conference weekend, but creating and feeding a robust corporate sponsorship program has benefits well beyond this one weekend for your State. If done correctly, you will have cultivated a community of professionals ready to donate time, talent, and treasure to your Military Balls, Scholarships, and Hospitality Suites. Again, "pay to play" is not expected as industry understands that being a higher-level donor does not guarantee a lucrative order from the USPFO. However, making Industry feel valued—and not just paying lip service—really works! As stated before, when non-partner or lower tier companies see others getting access, that encourages them to step up their support. Here are a few items to consider when trying to host a conference that builds relationships:

- a. Schedule your conference dates carefully. The NGAUS website has all the conference dates listed. Be mindful that smaller companies have small booth staff so they can only attend one conference at a time. Also, there are some states that annually use the same weekends, and it is probably best not to overlap those dates. Additionally, be aware of other industry show events [for example, AUSA, AAAA, MCOE and SHOT]—ask a few of your vendors (or a CAP member) to give you their trade show lists to help keep you clear of those weekends. February-May are very busy months for trade shows. Additionally, you may want to consider how end of year spending can play into your conference planning. Industry partners often get frantic calls in August and September from units who have money they "have to spend", so it would be beneficial if industry could interact with them before this spending frenzy.
- b. Make sure the TAG and Senior Leaders are present (barring deployments or exigent circumstances) and encourage them to use time with Industry for professional development. They should know what new goods and services are out here to make their jobs easier and safer.



- c. **Have the TAG visit every large donor's booth—period.** Set limits with the Company (if needed). Send a runner to tell the booth personnel they will have 3 minutes (or whatever), as the TAG enters the hall. Stick to that limit so everyone on your list gets a visit. This can even be done on Friday before the conference begins, or during set up—just let us know when to be on site.
- d. Have a small top donor only event with TAG and Senior Leadership—and have them stand in the front and introduce themselves so we can see them. Encourage them to wear unit polo shirts, if possible, to help us identify them.
- e. As mentioned above, place banners and backdrops of your top donors in the conference room to give maximum exposure during the event. Those can be moved to the Ballroom later. For the lowest cost to the Association, ask your Corporate Partners to bring a roll up stand or banner and have them take it when they leave.
- f. The timing and lengths of breaks are critical. They need to be long enough to give time for the bathroom, coffee, and vendors--but not so long where they can wander away to enjoy the scenery of the town.
- g. Recognize your donors during the conference verbally. Some states bring donors up at the end of the conference and give each name and company—take a picture and hand a coin. That is well received. A couple of states that used to do that have stopped, which has been disappointing, so we recommend considering this public acknowledgement. States can even do this with flexibility, meaning the high tier donors get individual acknowledgement, medium as a group, and lower maybe just read names or show them on the screen. We would also recommend doing this at the beginning of your conference rather than the end just so there is time for your attendees to visit these Industry partners.
- h. Give the attendees a list of your supporters and their levels at the conference and encourage them to visit us during the breaks—it's professional development to see new technologies.
- i. Consider using ribbons or other reusable markings to designate the various donation tiers at each booth. Collect them back up at the end of the conference or place a drop box for Industry to return them and name tag holders (See J. below).
- j. Create name tags for each attendee and include RANK and UNIT. The plastic holders can be reused so collect them back up with a drop box in the hall or near the registration table.
- k. Encourage and plan for families to come to the Conference. **TGIF-The Guard Is Family**, so if you really want to get your Guardsmen to attend, have spouse and kid activities so everyone comes. Again, having a robust vendor network can be key here because we can sponsor some events like a Kids' Zone or Spousal luncheon. Make sure there is childcare available during the Saturday night ball. Make this a mini getaway for families!
- l. In that vein, use some of the Corporate Sponsorship money to pay for promising Company-grade leaders to attend. Today's Captain may be tomorrow's TAG!
- m. If you invite vendors to your Saturday evening event, don't sit Industry together. We see each other enough. You can ask with whom we would like to sit and see if you

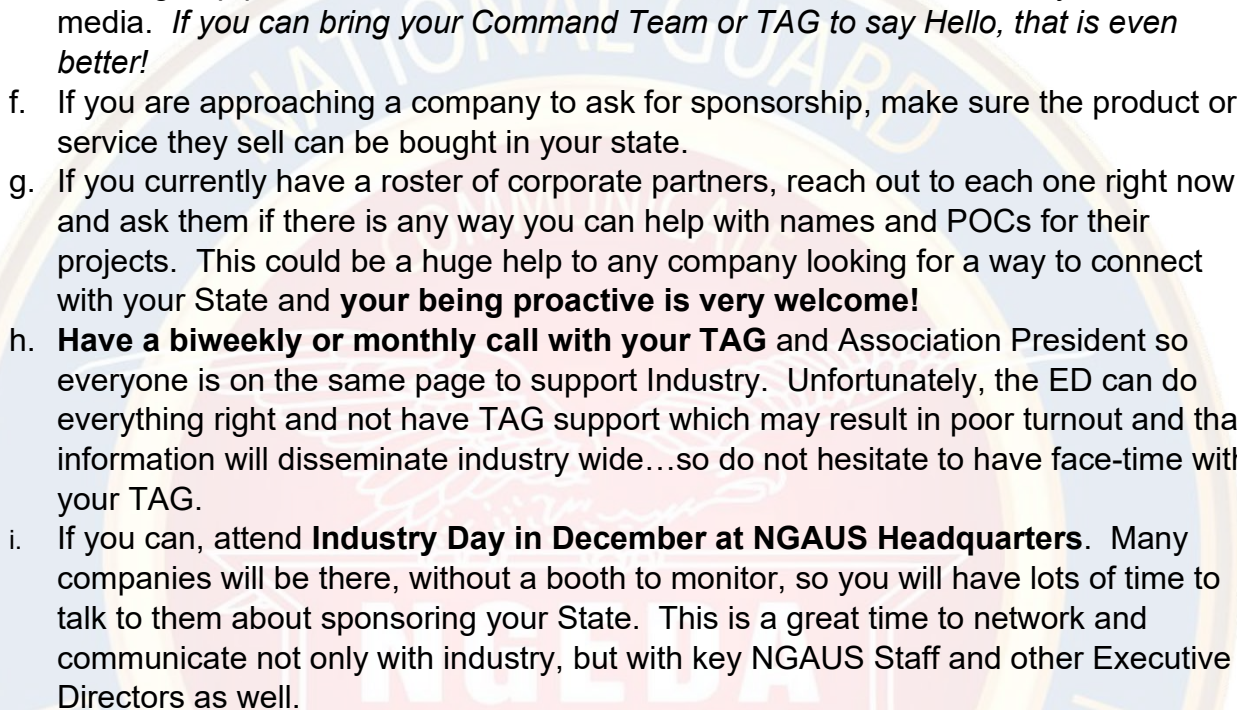
can arrange that. Most of us will keep work-talk to a minimum, but it would be nice to attach a face to a name.

- n. **Expensive thank you gifts from the Association are not necessary.** We give money to the Association to help the members and for some companies, those gifts may be relegated somewhere and not really appreciated. So, do not feel like you must go overboard here. Keep in mind that we may have to put your gift in our suitcase or pay for shipping back home if the item is large or breakable.
- o. Gifts of a flown US flag and certificate or a coin are appreciated—but **let us frame it so you don't spend that money.**
- p. Use some of the Corporate Sponsorship money to pay for lifetime digital memberships to NGAUS and their State Association. **HINT: This increases your membership!**
- q. **ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE** the event with the Troops! We want to see those uniforms, so coordinate everything with your TAGs office to get Soldiers and Airmen into the venue.
- r. **FOLLOW UP WITH A POST CONFERENCE EXHIBITOR SURVEY.** If you do not ask, you will not know how you can improve your event. Some Corporate Partners may even shy away from telling you the truth to your face so as not to hurt your feelings—so an anonymous format is best.
- s. **CONFERENCE PRACTICALS**  
Location Matters. Where you place your industry booths, sponsors, refreshments and attendees in relation to each other can have a large impact on the experience of your supporting industry. It is pivotal to recognize traffic patterns to and from conference rooms, bathrooms, food and beverage, and the exhibit areas. The higher the traffic flow, the more exposure; these locations are exceptional ways to recognize higher level donors. It is also important to increase the need for conference attendees to have to travel to or through the exhibit area; locating food and beverages with the exhibitors greatly enhances the industry experience. [See Attachments A, B, and C.]

## **NON-CONFERENCE TOUCHPOINTS THAT ARE FREE OR LOW COST**

- a. Some State Associations have started holding separate “Vendor Days” or “Senior Leadership Workshops” separate from the annual meeting and overall, these are very well received by Industry. These events can be held in the State’s Headquarters in a more relaxed setting when attendees are not subdivided between conference breakouts, vendor visits and bathroom breaks. If nothing else, there may be repeat contact with a POC Industry has already met. If you opt to try this, make sure you advertise it very well to get people to visit. Place signage in and out of the building to the Vendor areas.
- b. Social media posts thanking a Company for sponsoring are very much appreciated in today’s world of LIKES and FOLLOWS! Have a photo taken with TAG at the Annual Meeting and post the Thank You on FB/IG/LI/X. *If your association has no social media, grab some young Soldier or Airman and have them set it up for you.* **This is no cost to you!**

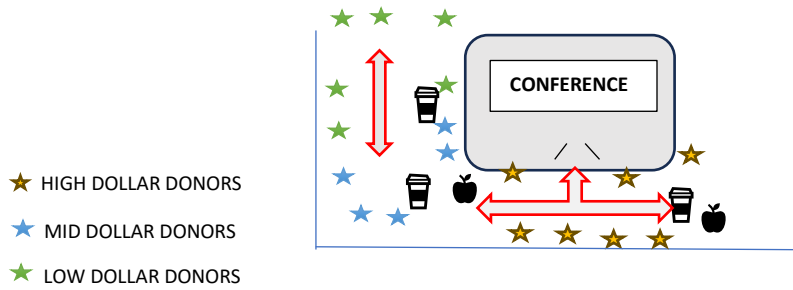


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- c. **Include your high dollar donors in newsletters** and other communications from the Association. A simple “Thank you” is significant.
  - d. Keep an eye on other large industry events, like NGAUS, EANGUS, Army Aviation Association, SHOT Show, MCOE (Maneuver Center of Excellence) Conference, Fire Support Conference, AUSA, and others—if you have units attending these shows, send them a list of your corporate partners with booth numbers and tell them to stop by and say, “Thank you for supporting our State.” **It means A LOT to hear those little words!** Additionally, you can even ask your Corporate Partners to give you that trade show information themselves to save yourself work. **This is no cost to you!**
  - e. When you attend NGAUS/EANGUS as the ED, and you **should** attend, bring your full contingent and thank your Sponsors with something small like a pin or shirt and take a group photo...then send it to them as a memento or POST it on your social media. *If you can bring your Command Team or TAG to say Hello, that is even better!*
  - f. If you are approaching a company to ask for sponsorship, make sure the product or service they sell can be bought in your state.
  - g. If you currently have a roster of corporate partners, reach out to each one right now and ask them if there is any way you can help with names and POCs for their projects. This could be a huge help to any company looking for a way to connect with your State and **your being proactive is very welcome!**
  - h. **Have a biweekly or monthly call with your TAG** and Association President so everyone is on the same page to support Industry. Unfortunately, the ED can do everything right and not have TAG support which may result in poor turnout and that information will disseminate industry wide...so do not hesitate to have face-time with your TAG.
  - i. If you can, attend **Industry Day in December at NGAUS Headquarters**. Many companies will be there, without a booth to monitor, so you will have lots of time to talk to them about sponsoring your State. This is a great time to network and communicate not only with industry, but with key NGAUS Staff and other Executive Directors as well.


If you have any questions, please reach out to any of your industry partners or to CAP Members Victoria McDermott, Phantom Products, Inc. 321-690-6729 or Darin Gilderoy, Vidmar/Lista/Cribmaster, 678-396-0972, creators of this document.

## ATTACHMENT A

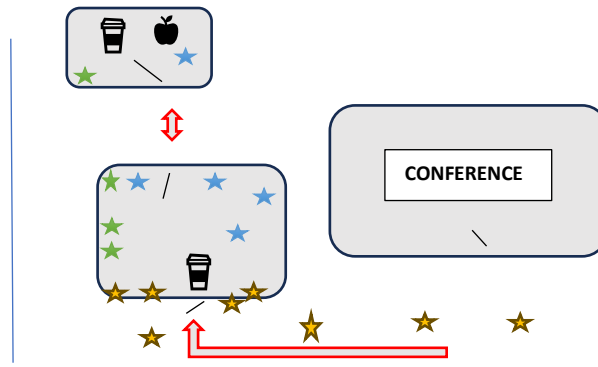
### SAMPLE CONFERENCE LAYOUT: (RED arrows are traffic flow)



 DRINK STATION

 FOOD STATION

\*\*\*\*\*OR\*\*\*\*\*





## ATTACHMENT B

### **SAMPLE CONFERENCE AGENDA:**

Thursday 1800: High Level Donor Dinner or Event

Friday 0700:	Fun run/shooting/golf
Friday 0800-1600:	Exhibitor setup
Friday 1700:	TAG Reception (with Commanders—and please introduce them)
Friday 1830:	Exhibit Ribbon Cutting or Exhibit Hall Opening or Fun event
Friday 1845:	TAG/ATAG Visit with vendors
Friday 2030:	Close Exhibit Hall
Friday 2100:	Fun evening event

Saturday 0730:	Coffee/breakfast 30 minutes before opening.
Saturday 0800:	Conference begins
Saturday 0900:	Bring Vendors into conference for recognition
Saturday 1015-1130:	Mid-morning bathroom/coffee/snack break
Saturday 1200:	Lunch w/ Exhibitors
Saturday 1400-1415:	Bathroom/soda/snack break
Saturday 1530:	Conference ends for evening prep
Saturday 1800:	Dinner

## ATTACHMENT C

### **POST EVENT SURVEY SUGGESTIONS:**

After your event, send out a survey! Grab everyone's business cards during the event...then use them! We suggest that you allow for anonymous responses so that no one feels like they are "letting you down" by giving critical feedback. You should ask these questions, at least:

- a. Are you a Corporate Sponsor? YES/NO  
 If yes to (a), at what level are you a Sponsor? GOLD/SILVER/BRONZE [or whatever your tiers are.]  
 If no to (a), what is holding you back?
- b. Do you feel that your specific level has been beneficial? YES/NO  
 If yes to (c), what has benefited you the most (i.e. TAG reception, booth location, signage.)  
 If no to (c), please tell us what benefit you were missing:
- c. Regarding contact from the Command Team, they were very visible:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- d. I saw the people I needed to see:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- e. Regarding the Conference schedule, vendors had enough time with personnel:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- f. The Conference location in the State was good:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- g. The Conference facility was laid out well.  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- h. The food/coffee/snack availability was acceptable:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- i. The vendor layout worked well.  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- j. The evening/non exhibit activities were worth attending:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- k. You plan to attend our Conference next year.  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- l. You plan to Sponsor our State next year:  

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5
- m. What could we have done better over the weekend?
- n. What can we add as a benefit to your Corporate Sponsorship?
- o. Is there anything we can do to help you work with our State?
- p. Can we contact you for additional information? YES/NO  
 If yes, please provide your Name, Company and contact information.