

**Department of Defense (DoD) Outreach Engagements with
Non-Governmental Organizations
that Represent the Military and Veteran Community**

PURPOSE

As part of achieving its mission to inform the American public about Department of Defense policies, objectives, and achievements, DoD hosts regularly-occurring outreach engagements with leaders of key non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose reach extends to a national membership of individuals and/or other organizations throughout the military and veteran community.

These outreach events, which most often are conducted as roundtable discussions with senior DoD leaders and subject matter experts, are an efficient and important two-way conduit to communicate broadly the significant Defense issues of interest to the military and veteran community, and to receive feedback, ideas and concerns on specific DoD issues from the leading representational voices in the community.

An overarching goal of these engagements is to promote a productive, positive, and collaborative dialogue between key organizations and the Department, as well as among the participating organizations themselves, which builds understanding and is beneficial to military service members, veterans, and their families.

Issues addressed in these types of engagements include, but are not limited to: defense budget priorities; global security challenges; operations; personnel, readiness and family support programs; healthcare and wellness programs; military compensation and benefits; past conflict POW/MIA accounting; and sexual assault and suicide prevention programs.

CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

To best achieve the purpose and intent of this outreach program, OASD(PA) evaluates and invites organizations to participate in engagements based on a number of factors. DoD makes the final determination on which organizations are invited to participate; participation is driven by the needs of the Department. The primary factors and criteria for determining NGO participation are:

1. Ensure there is evidence that the magnitude of an organization's reach into the military and veteran community, government, and general public is substantial and penetrates further than the Department is able to reach on its own.
2. Establish the organization's institutional purpose and issue focus to determine its relevancy to the military community and/or issue being addressed in the engagement.

3. Ascertain whether the organization is widely known, respected, and recognized by the military community as a best practice and upstanding representational leader for issues discussed during outreach events.
4. Limit participation based on available space in conference room facilities or telecommunications bandwidth for hosting events such as roundtable meetings and conference calls. Include the fewest number of participants needed to achieve the engagement objective so that all participants have an equal opportunity to engage in the dialogue while ensuring the broadest possible reach across all constituencies.

The list of invited organizations is designed to reflect the broad diversity of thought in the military community; e.g., organizations that represent active, guard and reserve components; military veterans across conflicts; wounded, ill and injured service members; military family members, including survivor families and care-givers; and organizations that represent businesses connected to the military community.

When evaluating an organization within these factors, DoD considers aspects such as:

- Whether the organization is formally incorporated. It is expected that participating organizations are established as non-governmental organizations that are fully-compliant with the relevant Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations applicable to their organizational status. If an organization is incorporated as a tax-exempt nonprofit, it must provide a copy of its IRS determination letter and most recent IRS Form 990 as proof of current status and compliance. Compliance is especially important if the organization actively promotes itself as a nonprofit and solicits tax-deductible donations on that basis.
- Whether the organization has national leaders and a governing structure (e.g., a board of directors/advisors, and a national president or executive director).
- Whether the organization has a formal organizational charter or approved bylaws that establish governance of the organization in line with generally accepted management standards for operating representational organizations.
- Whether the organization has a program purpose and/or focus on specific issues relevant to the military and veteran community or on the topics being discussed at a specific DoD outreach event.
- Whether the organization represents a significant membership base within the military and veteran community at large, or within a defined sector of the military community. The organization's membership eligibility criteria should reflect that representation, and the organization must be willing to provide credible evidence of their membership size and composition if asked to do so.
- Whether the organization conducts topical meetings, gatherings, or symposia for their members on a regular basis.

- Whether the organization's leaders participate in national forums as thought leaders, subject matter experts or stakeholders in areas such as research, public policy development, or advocacy on behalf of their members.
- Whether the organization provides a website, listserv, newsletter or other ongoing methods of communicating current news and information to their members.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

In order to achieve the positive, respectful, constructive, and collaborative intent of these engagements, a set of rules of engagement has been established and is expected from all participants.

- Unless otherwise agreed in advance, all engagements are conducted on background. Comments made by participating DoD personnel must be attributed to a Defense Official. In addition, participating organizations may not publicly quote or represent the position or opinion of another participating organization without that organization's permission.
- Note-taking during engagements is permissible and encouraged. However, without the explicit prior consent of all parties, the recording, taping, transcribing or otherwise capturing verbatim the dialogue of an engagement is prohibited.
- To allow organizations an opportunity to provide meaningful input on important Defense issues during the development of policy and programs, certain conversations must remain closely held within the discussion group to preserve the decision-making space of senior Defense leaders and government officials. These cases are typically identified, and organizations must agree to comply with the restriction.
- All viewpoints are welcome and are expected be shared and respected during engagement dialogue. This includes opinions that are contrary to DoD positions and policy objectives, as well as expressions of perceived DoD deficiencies. A robust dialogue and debate in good faith is essential to the collaborative nature and effectiveness of these engagements.
- Personal attacks on, or campaigns against, individual DoD employees, as well as personal attacks between members of participating organizations, are not tolerated, and are grounds for removal from future engagements. This restriction extends to the behavior and public communications of participating organizations at all times and in all public forums and media.
- Every effort is made to provide engagement agendas in advance and to allow participants to suggest agenda topics. Participants must agree to keep the dialogue within the bounds of agreed-upon or stated agenda topics.

- All dialogue and conduct during engagements will be respectful and professional. Name-calling, argumentative banter, shouting, interruptions, or other disrespectful and disruptive behavior are not tolerated.
- Most issues discussed during engagements are topics of an ongoing nature. Therefore, organizations must participate consistently in the series of engagements on a specific issue.
- DoD invitations to participate in engagements are sent to specific individuals within the invited organizations. Invitations are not transferable without prior approval.
- Invitees may not forward DoD invitations to individuals outside their respective organization, nor may they share externally the dial-in information for conference call engagements.
- On occasion, to facilitate meaningful dialogue, certain information will be provided to invited organizations with instructions that it is embargoed until public release, which typically will occur during a DoD press conference or press release following the engagement. Compliance with such restrictions is mandatory.
- Unless specifically permitted, invitees may not share in advance any information about the engagement to others outside of their organization.