



## Housing Credit Property Event Guidelines

Members of Congress must know firsthand the impact of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (Housing Credit) in their districts in order to become champions of the program. One of the best ways to make the program memorable is to invite them to see properties and meet residents for themselves. The following guidelines are intended as a quick and easy property event planning resource for developers of Housing Credit properties. For a more comprehensive source of information, refer to The Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition Grand Opening Guide for LIHTC Developers. Keep in mind that events can center on a number of milestones or occasions, including groundbreaking, grand openings, property tours or resident meetings.

**Identify speakers.** Typical speakers include a representative from each major partner involved in the property's development (developer, financiers, housing agency officials, elected leaders, residents, etc.) or management who can discuss the property and its impact in the community. If members of Congress are able to attend, they should be offered the opportunity to speak about the Housing Credit even if they had not been involved in the development.

**Pick a date, time and space at the property.** A primary consideration is scheduling the event when priority partners and elected officials can attend – consult the Congressional calendar and coordinate with schedulers and district offices. Offer a range of days when working with congressional offices and be as flexible as possible. Also consider holidays, competing community events, weather, and the size of the space as it relates to the size of the expected crowd.

**Create a guest list and invite stakeholders.** Invitations should be sent to people from organizations involved in the property from pre-development and design through the opening, as well as local officials, the property management company, neighbors, and potential or current residents (depending on the property's stage of development/occupancy). Send invites four weeks prior to the event. Invite members of Congress before inviting other guests in order to best accommodate their schedules.

**Survey site and secure event equipment.** Reserve a podium, tables, chairs, and microphone/speaker system. If your event is outside, consider ordering a tent. Make sure to schedule a site visit with the property manager, tent vendor and caterer at least 3 to 4 weeks out to determine the best location for the tent, food and beverage set-up.

**Coordinate food and/or beverages.** If food and beverages are being served, consult a catering company at least four weeks ahead of time. Confirm that your vendor will provide plates, cups, napkins, cutlery and tablecloths, along with the food and beverages. Food is not necessary, but it's a nice addition. Provide at least water in the warmer months and coffee in the cooler months.

**Prepare photo op.** Identify participants, who usually include members of the speaking program along with any other representatives of major partners involved in the development of the property. Communicate to participants ahead of time where to go immediately after the speaking program, typically when a photo op should take place. For groundbreakings, procure hard hats and shovels for the photo. Procure ribbon and large scissors for grand opening ribbon cuttings. Think about signage. Do you have a banner or sign with your logo that you would like to display?



**Invite media.** If you're planning media outreach, begin coordinating with partners a month before the grand opening on key messages that you want reporters to understand about your development, businesses and organizations. Draft a press release. Give yourself enough time to think about which partners should be quoted in the release and to get their quotes approved.

A week prior to the grand opening, send a concise email (media advisory) to media outlets that you would like to attend your event with the who, what, where, when, and why. Follow up with a call to make sure they received it and that it's on their books for coverage consideration the day of your event. Call again the day before your event to make sure it's still on their radar.

Send the press release to media the day-of—or in advance under embargo, meaning media will not publish your news until an agreed-upon time—announcing the event, detailing the development and the role of each partner as appropriate. Offer a spokesperson to put the grand opening in context, discuss the broader impact of the Housing Credit in the state or community, and answer any questions. (See grand opening guide for media advisory and press release templates and additional info).