

Strategies for hosting an Opportunity Zones convening

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In communities throughout the nation, convenings have been held to engage a cross section of national and local leaders, and develop frameworks for maximizing the potential of Opportunity Zones (OZ) designations. The following strategies for hosting an effective convening are informed by the success of past OZ events. Those interested in hosting a local OZ convening can use this guide as a roadmap and tailor the strategies provided to meet their unique needs and goals.

What is the purpose of an Opportunity Zones convening?

Convenings both large and small are an effective means of gathering stakeholders who otherwise may not interact with each other and focusing their expertise and insights on a specific investment opportunity or geographic area. OZ convenings have been curated to focus on the following goals. Multiple goals can be addressed in one convening with thorough planning, and proper expectation setting.

1. To share and exchange information with a diverse stakeholder group
2. To coordinate a neighborhood-level strategy for engaging investors and establishing collaborative partnerships that deliver community benefits
3. To develop a plan or framework for attracting capital to a specific investment opportunity or geographic area
4. To present investment opportunities to local and outside investors

Convenings can also focus on a thematic issue that

applies to a broad geographic area. For example, a nonprofit organization might host a meeting on leveraging OZs to address child outcomes. Mission-aligned capital providers, service providers, and organizations working in the education and childcare sectors should be invited to participate. Convening outcomes might include identifying eligible investment opportunities, developing a strategy for securing investment, and formalizing new partnerships among participants.

Who should attend an Opportunity Zones convening?

If the goal is to provide information to a large and diverse audience, hosts can cast a wide net when extending invitations. Work with local partners and OZ stakeholders to distribute information about the meeting and promote the event on social media and online platforms if that option is available. However, if the convening is focused on a specific investment opportunity or neighborhood, it is best to gather only those with applicable expertise or a direct stake in the outcomes.

Invite someone who has deep knowledge of the regulations that govern the OZ policy, investment structures that can be leveraged, and the numerous activities that have been financed with OZ equity. Local OZ coordinators or officers are also considered OZ experts given their deep insights on local activities and knowledge of OZ investment strategies and the national OZ marketplace. OZ experts can provide a market overview at the beginning of the meeting to frame the conversation and can answer questions throughout the convening to help inform ideas in real-time.

As a rule of thumb, it is ideal to have participation from a diverse group of stakeholders positioned to provide technical expertise or make decisions relevant to the convening topic. For example:

- Government leaders
 - Elected officials
 - Local departments and agencies responsible for community and economic development, housing, land planning, and small business and commerce
 - Quasi public-private entities focused on community and economic development
 - Federal agency field offices
- Property owners
 - Stakeholders with site control of strategic property
 - Government agencies with vacant or underutilized property
 - Community anchors and representatives with vacant or underutilized property
- Community representatives serving residents and businesses in OZs
 - Nonprofit organizations and similar service providers
 - Local elected officials
 - Local Chamber of Commerce
 - Homeowner and renter associations
 - Pre-K and K-12 schools
 - Childcare operators
- Community anchors located in or adjacent to OZs
 - Faith-based institutions
 - Large employers
 - Colleges and universities
 - Healthcare providers
 - Accelerators and innovation campuses
- Capital providers
 - Community Development Financial Institutions
 - Banks
 - Philanthropic organizations and family offices
 - Financial advisors
 - Fund managers
 - Private equity, angel, and venture capital investors
- Professional services
 - Real estate developers and land planning experts
 - Law firms
 - Accounting firms

Where should an Opportunity Zones convening occur?

If possible, the convening should occur in an OZ or at the site of the project or business seeking OZ investment. This allows participants to ground themselves in the geography and conditions of the neighborhood and to identify local assets that could be leveraged to attract investment. Doing so also helps facilitate the participation of local residents and business owners. As an alternative,

a more traditional conference setting or large community meeting space could be complemented by site or neighborhood tours in OZs nearby.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted on-site meetings online. Because OZ tax incentives gradually decrease through 2026 and designated zones are competing for the attention of investors, time is of the essence. If the convening cannot be safely held in-person, using an online meeting platform is recommended to ensure planning and engagement efforts continue to advance.

How are Opportunity Zones convenings structured?

The agenda for the meeting will be informed by the purpose and desired outcomes of the convening. Dedicated time should be allotted for networking, baselining participants’ knowledge of the OZ policy and current market activity, and providing

information on local investment opportunities. The following agendas provide a basis for structuring a half-day OZ convening.

If the situation allows, additional components can be added to the convening, such as site tours or one-on-one meetings between investors and those seeking OZ investment.

Purpose: Provide information to a diverse group of cross-sector stakeholders and highlight local investment opportunities.

Topic	Presenters	Time Allotted
Networking	N/A	15 minutes
Purpose of convening and desired outcomes	Convener	15 minutes
Overview of OZ policy and market activity	Local or national OZ expert	30 minutes
Investment pitch	Local business or project sponsor	5 minutes
Models for OZ investment and partnerships	Panel of service providers, government leaders, and community representatives and anchors	45 minutes
Investment pitch	Local business or project sponsor	5 minutes
Networking	N/A	15 minutes
Local strategy for maximizing the potential of OZ designations	Panel of local stakeholders, including: government leaders, service providers, and community representatives and anchors	30 minutes
Investment pitch	Local business or project sponsor	5 minutes
Investor insights and strategies for raising capital	Panel of capital providers and recipients of OZ equity	45 minutes
Summary of information presented and identification of next steps	Convener	15 minutes
Networking	N/A	15 minutes

Purpose: Convene vested parties and aligned partners for a charrette-style working-session focused on a project or neighborhood.

Topic	Presenters	Time Allotted
Purpose of convening and desired outcomes	Convener	15 minutes
Overview of OZ policy and market activity	Local or national OZ expert	30 minutes
Contextual overview of investment opportunity or neighborhood of focus, including: current and future conditions, needs, assets, and key stakeholders or partners	Panel of local stakeholders, including: government leaders, property owners, service providers, and community representatives and anchors	60 minutes
Networking	N/A	15 minutes
Investor insights	Panel of capital providers and OZ equity recipients	30 minutes
Investment models	Panel of legal and accounting service providers	30 minutes
Networking	N/A	15 minutes
Ideation and brainstorming session to develop a strategy for aligning partners and securing financing	Interactive session	60 minutes
Summary of decisions made during the sessions and identification of next steps	Convener	30 minutes

Participants should leave the convening with the information needed to access resources, contact presenters and other participants, and complete action items, if assigned. To ensure continued progress toward stated goals, participants should also leave with a clear understanding of next steps,

an associated timeline for completing action items, their role in any ongoing effort, and an understanding of who is responsible for leading that effort. Convening materials and relevant contact information should be made available online or sent to participants following the meeting.

More information

For more information, view the event overviews and materials from the following convenings:

- Maryland Opportunity Zones Conference: [event overview](#) and [presentations](#)
- We Grow KC Opportunity Zones Investor Summit: [event overview](#) and [deal descriptions](#)
- Erie Homecoming 2019: [event recap](#) and [news coverage](#)
- Be Inspired Summit: [event overview](#) and [event recap](#)

Local government, philanthropic organizations, community anchors, and similarly positioned local leaders should not take for granted the importance of continued efforts to raise awareness of OZs, forge connections, educate OZ residents and businesses, and further community engagement. The places in which diverse stakeholder groups convened early, in the months after the enactment of OZs, got off to a head start. The policy finally has a regulatory framework, and there is ample inspiration to be drawn from the activity currently taking place across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the urgency to engage all vested stakeholders in recovery and revitalization efforts. OZs is well positioned to aid in those efforts, and the strategies offered for convening can be leveraged to get all interested parties to the table.

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