

Industry Visits to Universities Outside Major Metros

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Brief overview

A UIDP project group has prepared the draft of a white paper, “Maximizing Outcomes from University-Hosted Industry Visits Quick Guide.” Many of the key findings can be applied in the context of universities set in a non-metropolitan area.

Use in U-I engagements outside of major metropolitan areas

When getting to a university is difficult, unique challenges arise, but there are a range of options for universities to optimize their value and raise awareness among industry partners. The University of Waterloo is located about 93 kilometers (58 miles) from Toronto and its international airport, making air and ground travel necessary to reach the campus.

Key features

- **Meaningful visits:** When getting to a location is difficult, the purpose and scope of any visit may have to be expanded to allow for fewer, more helpful visits. As such, each event may take on additional purpose. One example is the timing of Waterloo’s Defence Research Forum in October 2019. To attract companies, Waterloo selectively timed the event to connect with the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend and the opening weekend of Oktoberfest in the area, which advertises itself as the largest event of its type outside Munich.
- **Careful preparation:** The further away the company is from the university, the less likely it is to know about local traffic, weather or general travel conditions. Sharing more information for each planned visit leaves visitors feeling that it’s supported by great partners. Plan carefully, consider a web conference before your face-to-face meetings, and manage the meetings with a planned, yet flexible agenda.
- **Flexibility around travel:** Flexibility is necessary if travel does not go as planned and the agenda cannot start on time. Stick as closely as possible to the pre-defined schedule to achieve desired outcomes; staying late is not always an option when guests need time to travel.
- **Strong follow up:** External and internal follow up is necessary to align expectations for moving forward and to acknowledge ownership of outstanding actions. Internal follow up is particularly helpful to keep working relationships healthy, even if the news to be shared is negative. Having difficult conversations early helps to strengthen the relationships and build trust for future events.



This toolkit is a product of the May 21-23, 2019 event hosted by UIDP and the University of Arkansas, “University-Industry Engagement Outside Major Metropolitan Areas and Megacities: Identifying Issues and Finding Solutions.”

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Key takeaways

- **Purpose and scope of the visit may need to be expanded** to allow for fewer, but more eventful visits.
- **Offer directions for getting to the campus or the meeting site** each time, to ensure visitors are up to date from the perspective of their travel plans.
- **Plan travel time** into and around the meeting agenda.
- **Responsiveness and flexibility** are the best tools to make you stand out.
- **Keep an eye out** for the full document: *Maximizing the Outcomes from University-Industry Visits- Quick Guide*.

Resources required

Internal preparation is required, which may include preparing read-ahead materials, a detailed agenda and logistics support (to include signage), as well as prepping participants on the focus and goals of the meeting. Non-disclosure or similar agreements may involve legal or contracting personnel. Funding for catering, audio-visual and other support services, such as preparing a post-meeting report, also must be allocated.

Best Practice Examples

The internal relationship with the research community is critically important. A defined plan to get to know researchers, understand their research applications, and build trust with the research office is necessary to ensure positive response when needed. Following up with internal stakeholders after the industry visit continues to foster trust, allows the relationships to stay strong and ensures that the next event will be even better.