



# Host a Civic Engagement Happy Hour!

*Do you want to meet scientists and engineers who are making a difference in your community?*

*Are you interested in inspiring scientists and engineers to get more involved with your local government?*

## What is a Civic Engagement Happy Hour?

Our model is simple. Invite a few scientists and engineers who are making a difference in your community to share their experiences in an informal setting. This approach provides a low pressure opportunity for exchanging experiences and ideas, while also helping you cultivate a network of civic-minded peers.

## Why host a Civic Engagement Happy Hour?

Through our outreach in the STEM community, we've learned that bringing civic-minded people together and sharing the experiences of those already making an impact can be a great way to encourage others to become more active citizens. From serving on commissions and advisory boards to volunteering with a science museum, the existing avenues to making a difference are numerous...but often unknown. A Civic Engagement Happy Hour provides an informal setting to learn more about how people with STEM backgrounds can engage locally.

## How do you host a Civic Engagement Happy Hour?

We have simplified our event model over time to minimize the planning effort. You will need to:

- **Secure a time and location for hosting the event.** We've found that early evening (~6pm) on a weekday in the back room of a bar or brewery works well for most attendees. If you check ahead, many venues are happy to reserve a space without charging a fee or a minimum.
- **Identify a few "featured guests" to talk about their experience with local engagement.** Think broadly, because there are many ways a scientist or engineer can make an impact in their community. Anyone from a local commissioner, a state or city employee, a local volunteer, or an elected official might make a great featured guest. For ideas about the types of activities or guests you may want to feature, take a look at our Local Engagement Checklist and our Stories from the Field blog series, as well as examples from past ESAL events on our website.
- **Advertise the event in your local community.** Share on social media and local listservs that reach people who would be interested in attending.
- **Plan the agenda ahead of time.** We suggest planning a short "formal" program where you share a few remarks about the importance of local civic engagement, introduce your featured guests, give them 3-5 minutes to talk about their experiences engaging locally...and, of course, direct your attendees to ESAL's online resources.
- **Make sure the event goes smoothly...and enjoy meeting people who share your interests!** Arrive at the event site a few minutes early to make sure everything is in order and hang signs directing people if needed. We recommend having a sign-up sheet and name tags. If your event draws people from a broad metro area, ask people to include their city so they can more easily identify their neighbors.
- **Document the event.** Take photos and jot down some key notes for a blog post about the event. It can also help to do a brief interview with your featured guests.
- **Build momentum toward ongoing engagement.** Have attendees commit to one of the activities in the Local Engagement Checklist...perhaps they can be a "featured guest" at your next event!

## How can ESAL support your Civic Engagement Happy Hour?

ESAL help to make your event a success in several ways:

- **Event and logistics templates.** Use our templates for everything from email invitations to featured guests to detailed “programs” for how to structure your events.
- **Identifying “featured guests”.** Need help finding engineers and scientists to feature at your event? ESAL’s nationwide network can help find someone near you.
- **Advertising your event.** ESAL will include your event on our website and advertise through our social media accounts and our listserv to help make your event a success.
- **Managing event RSVPs.** ESAL will create an RSVP form and manage responses so that you know how many attendees to expect.
- **Local Engagement handouts.** ESAL will send you materials such as copies of our Local Engagement Checklist, pens, and decals to hand out at your event.
- **Publishing a guest post about your event.** Civic Engagement Happy Hours often spark insights or produce advice that can benefit many. ESAL will help you edit and publish a guest post about your event on our blog to broaden the reach of your event.

## Sounds awesome! Where’s the legal fine print?

For ESAL to support your event, we ask you to stick to a couple of guidelines:

- **Political Advocacy** - As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, ESAL does not engage in political advocacy. This means no endorsing or fundraising for candidates for office. To avoid the appearance of doing so, we ask that you not invite featured guests who are actively campaigning (elected officials or past candidates are fine as long as the event does not give the appearance of endorsing their political views or affiliations).
- **Issue Advocacy** - ESAL believes that local decisions require local input, and we do not take positions on specific solutions or policies. While we are happy to support events that are focused on sharing thoughts and ideas about an issue area, we cannot support events that advocate for or endorse legislation or a specific policy outcome.

## I can’t wait to host my own Civic Engagement Happy Hour. What do I do next?

Drop us an email at [events@esal.us](mailto:events@esal.us) to tell us about you or your group, where you are located, and what support you’d like from ESAL. We will walk you through the process and help ensure your event is a success!



**Engineers & Scientists  
Acting Locally**