



## 2023 Convergence Handbook

### Table of Contents

Intro  
General info  
Registration  
Preparation and Shipping  
Load-In  
Day of Show  
After Show

### Intro

NCG and our co-ops are thrilled you are participating in Co+vergence 2023!

Over the last 11 Convergence events, your support has made NCG's annual Vendor Showcase one of the marquee events in the natural products industry, and this year will be another fun and productive event for our retailers and sponsors.

We're expecting over 300 attendees from over 200 of our NCG co-op locations. Once we've finalized the retailer registration list, we'll provide you with additional details on the participants and their contact information.

We will continue to use electronic show ordering to process show orders. You will receive more information soon about how to submit show deals for this year's Vendor Showcase. The show deal submission process will open in Partner Connection on Monday, May 15 and all show deals must be completed by Monday, May 29.

Our conference is scheduled to start on Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, and run through Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. The primary sponsor participation opportunity is the Vendor Showcase, taking place on August 4. Additional sponsor participation opportunities are available throughout the course of the event through Premier Sponsorships. There are opportunities to sponsor specific events, provide products for the SWAG bag, all in addition to attending the Vendor Showcase. Sponsor participation continues with The Co+vergence Afterparty held on the evening of August 4 from 5:30-11:30pm at the Amsterdam Bar and Hall in downtown Saint Paul.

Please see the Premier Sponsorship Guide, posted to Partner Co+nnnection, for more sponsorship ideas. Attendance at events other than the Vendor Showcase and afterparty are limited to companies that participate in premiere sponsorships.



## General Info

### Conference Location

All conference programming will be held at the RiverCentre, 175 W Kellogg Blvd., Saint Paul, MN 55102. The afterparty will be held at [Amsterdam Bar and Hall](#), 6<sup>th</sup> and Wabasha, Saint Paul, MN.

### Lodging Information

You are responsible for making your own travel and lodging reservations. We recommend reserving your lodging as soon as possible. There are many locations in [downtown St. Paul](#) that are within walking distance to the RiverCenter and the Amsterdam Bar and Hall.

### Sponsor Participation Schedule for Friday, August 4, 2023

Time	Event	Location	Sponsors
8:00-12:00am	Check-in and set-up for Vendor Showcase	RiverCentre Exhibit Hall	All sponsors
8:30-9:30am	Partner Education Workshop	Room locations TBD	Partner sponsors
9:45-10:45am	Partner Education Workshop	Room locations TBD	Partner sponsors
12:00-5:30pm	Vendor Showcase	RiverCentre Exhibit Hall	All sponsors
5:30-6:30pm	Breakdown and clean-up Vendor Showcase	RiverCentre Exhibit Hall	All sponsors
5:30-11:30pm	Reception	Amsterdam Bar and Hall	All sponsors

### Showcase Participation

Supporter Level sponsors may have up to **two (2)** representatives participate in the Vendor Showcase and Friday evening reception. Partner Level sponsors may have up to **three (3)** representatives and, in addition to the Vendor Showcase and reception, Partner Level sponsors will present educational workshops on Friday morning. Additional badges for brand representatives will be available for purchase at the check-in table on Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. Additional badges are \$200 and allow access to the Vendor Showcase and afterparty.

In past years, some event sponsors have expressed interest in hosting their own event during, or at a time or location adjacent to, Co+nvergence (e.g., during the evening after the day's programming is complete or the night before Co+nvergence). These ancillary events are prohibited. We welcome your ideas for ways we can work together to make Co+nvergence even better for our co-ops. If you've got an idea for something your brand would like to do for our co-ops during Co+nvergence, please contact the [Convergence Sponsorship Team](#) to see if we can work with you to make it a reality.

### Sponsorship Fees

Your organization will be invoiced for your sponsorship based on the information you provide in your show deal submission in Partner Connection. Your billing contact will receive an invoice via email for your sponsorship the week of June 12. Please pass this information on to your billing contact. The invoice terms are net 21 and all payments must be made directly to NCG.



Payments not received within invoice terms may be subject to deduction from UNFI with a 20% administrative fee, or cancellation of your attendance at our event.

### **Co+nvergence Afterparty**

Sponsors are invited to join us at the Amsterdam Bar and Hall for the best natural products industry party of the year on Friday, August 4, 2023, from 5:30-11:30pm following the Vendor Showcase. Plan on beverages, hors d'oeuvres, plenty of networking, music, and lots of fun! Your sponsorship fee covers the cost of participation of your company's representatives at the reception.

## **Registration**

**Sponsor Registration:** Registration is open! All participating vendors must register by Monday, May 29. Please refer to your registration email for registration survey link.

## **Preparation and Shipping**

### **Vendor Showcase**

Our Vendor Showcase is a tabletop show designed as an opportunity for you to educate NCG co-op staff, discuss specific attributes of your brand, showcase items that are trending favorably in sales, highlight new items and sample your products.

The Vendor Showcase will be held in the RiverCentre Exhibit Hall and will be open to conference attendees from 12:00-5:30pm. All vendor sponsors may begin setting up between 1:00-4:00 pm on Thursday and at 8:00am on Friday. *Set up must be completed by 12:00 pm on Friday.* NCG staff will be present to check you in and answer any questions you may have. A layout of tables in the showcase and table number assignments will be provided in advance of the show. This is a tabletop format (not booths like at larger shows), and each Supporter Sponsor will have one eight (8) foot table to set up a display representing your company. Partner Sponsors will have three six (6) foot tables. **This is not an Expo so please keep it relatively simple.**

### **Prizes and Trips**

To encourage buyers to visit your company's table, sponsors are encouraged to offer prizes or trips (i.e., to visit your company and learn more about your products). Throughout the Vendor Showcase and during Friday's party NCG will announce the winners. Prizes should be valued at a minimum of \$250 to be included in the raffle. Please consider that attendees will need to be able to travel with any prizes you offer and will not have the ability to store anything perishable during their stay.

If your company would like to supply something for our raffle and you didn't indicate that when you completed your registration, please contact the [Convergence Sponsorship Team](#).

In addition to prizes, sponsors are encouraged to provide a trip to one or more retailers to be raffled off during the event. Trips are a great opportunity to have an ambassador from a food co-op visit your production or growing facilities, learn about what makes your products different and better, and engage with your products more deeply. NCG will manage the selection of winners and announcements. If your company would like to offer a trip to one or more of our retailers,



and this wasn't already indicated on your registration, please contact the [Convergence Sponsorship Team](#).

### Show Deals

All Convergence sponsors are required to offer show deals to co-op buyers. The 2023 NCG Co+nvergence Show Deals Contract Terms and Conditions will be available on May 15th in the Resources section of Partner Connection.

Co-op buyers can pre-book their orders in the weeks leading up to Co+nvergence and can add to their orders following the show. Your company can submit its show deals starting Monday, May 15 in Partner Co+nnection, NCG's vendor portal. Show deals must be submitted by Monday, May 29th. If your brand works with a broker, we encourage you to work with them to submit your show deal. They are experienced in using the portal and can streamline that process for you. If you have credentials for the portal and regularly submit promotions for your brand you can submit your show deals directly. A Partner Co+nnection Show Deal User Guide will be available on Monday, May 15th in the Resources section of Partner Co+nnection.

### Shipping Instructions

Show materials shipped to the RiverCentre are being handled by Chrom Expo Services. Please refer to the Co+nvergence 2023 Exhibitor Service Kit, posted on Partner Co+nnection, for complete shipping instructions. If you will be shipping samples or promotional materials, please be sure to read this document carefully. There are separate instructions for shipping dry goods and items that are perishable or require special handling (such as chocolate).

### Guidelines for Vendor Showcase

#### Allowed:

- One (1) sponsor is allowed at each 8 ft. table space, with up to two (2) representatives allowed at each table for Supporter Level sponsors or three (3) representatives for Partner Level sponsors.
- Simple displays of products that fit the 8 ft. table space and include what you want to highlight, such as new and unique products.
- Floor displays or backdrops for displaying or hanging banners may be used if they do not physically hinder the experience of neighboring exhibitors, or block traffic flow in the aisles. Simple banners behind your table are preferred. A covered and skirted table with a tabletop sign with your company's name will be provided.
- Distributing samples is encouraged. Pre-packed takeaway samples are encouraged to be small enough for our traveling members to take on a plane in their carry-on luggage.
- **You are responsible for providing your own demo supplies and we encourage them to be compostable.** There will be a commercial composting stream as a part of show waste management. NCG encourages you to bring PFAS-free compostable service items.
- Product slicks, takeaway flyers, catalogues, promotional calendars, deal and demo info, and product coupons are allowed, but must be taken with you at the end of the show or recycled.
- **Cooking using a hot plate, convection oven, microwave or similar. No deep fryers. A fee of \$150 will be charged for access to electricity. Please bring a drop cord of 15'-25' and a power strip to facilitate taking that power the last few feet in your**



**table space. NCG reserves the right to deny requests for electricity based on availability and a sponsor's need. Requests for electricity on the day prior to or day of show will be accommodated if possible. The rate for electricity requested on the day of show is \$200.**

- Contact information for your company's representatives in each geographic region — remember this is a national conference and co-ops from all regions will be represented.
- Small company gifts are allowed (i.e., pens, calculators, magnets, etc.)
- Training and customer service materials are highly encouraged.
- Providing great education, networking, and having fun!

**NOT allowed:**

- More than one (1) sponsor at each table.
- Offering show deals/discounts not published in our meeting program at the showcase.
- Floor displays or backdrops for displaying or hanging banners that physically hinder the experience of neighboring exhibitors, or block traffic flow in the aisle.
- Food prep beyond simple cutting, washing or similar actions.
- **The use of deep fryers.**
- Using bathroom floor drains or sinks to dispose of water or food.
- Parking at the loading area for more than 15 minutes.

**Leaving products and waste at your table at the end of the show.** Please plan on boxing up all leftover products, recycling any glass, aluminum or plastic containers, breaking down additional boxes and leaving your table cleaned up. A food bank will pick up any unopened leftover perishable and non-perishable product after the show. Donatable products will need to be placed in designated collection locations.

**Show Floor Layout and Booth Numbers**

The show floor layout will be finalized the week of June 19 and posted to Partner Connection. We'll send a message when this process is complete, and the layout is available.

**Ice Pricing**

Bags of ice will be available at the show, 18 pounds for \$10. Ice ordered during registration will be included on the sponsorship invoice. We will have limited quantities of ice for sale at the show for purchase using a credit card at the registration table.

**Food Prep Equipment**

If you are planning to cook at your table, please keep the following limitations in mind:

- **Deep fryers and open flames are not allowed.**
- You may use a microwave, toaster oven, pizza oven, air fryer or another similar electric appliance.
- **You must bring something to sit under your cooking appliance that will shield the table and tablecloth from heat.** A cutting board or similar item is ideal. Our provider has had both tablecloths and the tables themselves suffer damage from the types of cooking appliances listed above.



### Cold Food Storage and Food Preparation

The RiverCentre show floor has two concession stands which will be available to all attendees for food storage and prep. First and foremost is the frozen and refrigerated storage that will be available to all brand attendees on a first come basis. There are multiple doors of commercial freezer and refrigerated reach-in storage as well as a small walk-in cooler. These concession stands also have triple sinks for washing service wares and some table space for basic cutting and other prep. There is no prep equipment available for use, so please plan to bring a knife, cutting board and whatever else you may need for food prep.

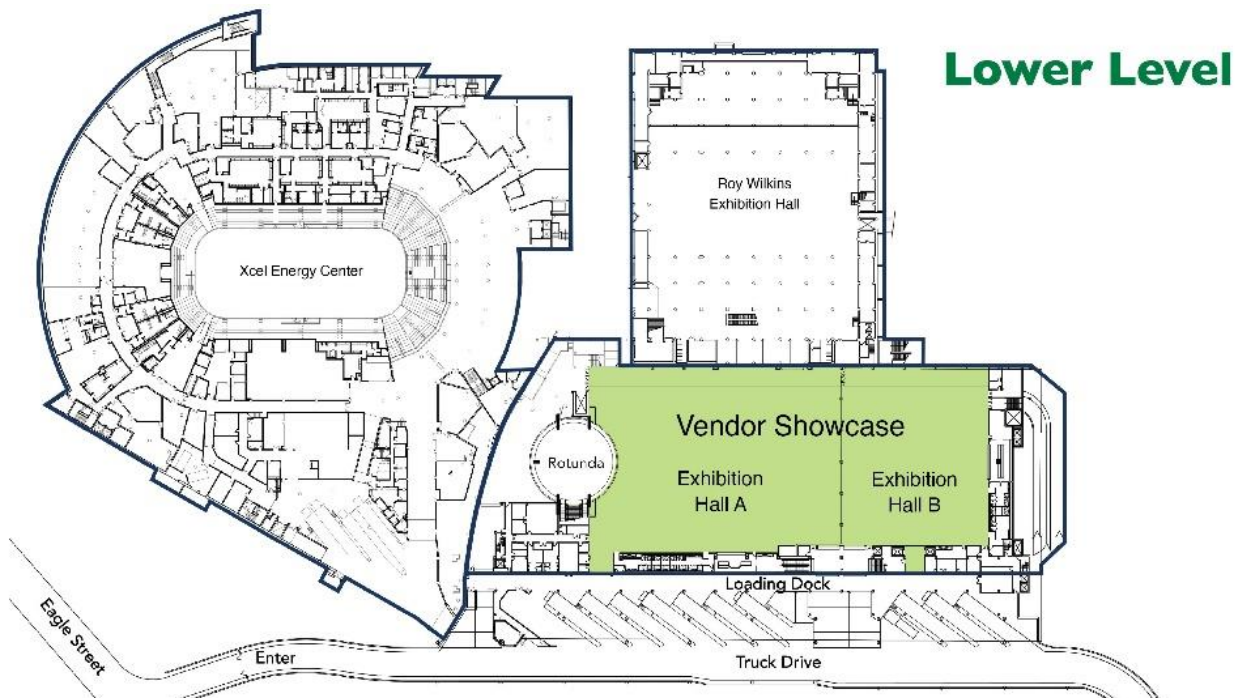
### Load-In

#### Directions

For Vendor Showcase load-in at the Saint Paul RiverCentre on Wednesday, please be sure to put this address into your navigation: **310 Eagle Street, St. Paul, MN.**

Once you are close to RiverCentre and you turn onto Eagle Street from Kellogg Blvd., follow the signs for the loading dock. The loading dock is the primary means for delivering cargo from your vehicle to the show floor. Using other entrances to bring significant cargo to the show will be arduous and inconvenient.

This map of Saint Paul RiverCentre’s lower level shows the loading dock area in relation to the Vendor Showcase exhibit hall (click the map for a larger view):







## **Parking and Unloading**

Vendors will unload at the RiverCentre Loading Dock, 310 Eagle Street. They will have 15 minutes to unload their vehicles. Once vehicles are unloaded, vendors will need to exit the loading dock for parking. Personal vehicle parking is available at the RiverCentre Parking Ramp (150th West Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55102).

If you are bringing items to the show floor yourself, try to bring a handcart of some sort to assist with loading in and out. There are collapsible versions that are very compact. There is always a shortage of carts for vendor load in and out at Co+nvergence.

If you need to park a vehicle that is taller than 6' 9" and has a gross vehicle weight of 5000lbs or more, please contact Jeremy Nelson with Reef Parking at [Jeremy.Nelson@reefparking.com](mailto:Jeremy.Nelson@reefparking.com) or at 651.223.5795, and he will be able to assist with parking options.

There are limited food options near RiverCentre, and we are unable to provide lunch this year. We are expecting more than 600 vendor representatives for the Co+nvergence Vendor Showcase. Please plan to bring your lunch or plan for that meal. Additionally, the Headwaters Café located onsite will be open 7:30am to 2:00pm and can provide a limited capacity for meals on Friday.

## **Day of Show**

### **Additional Tables**

If you would like to have an extra table in your space for cooking or other preparation of samples, please be in contact with us at [Convergence.Sponsors@ncg.coop](mailto:Convergence.Sponsors@ncg.coop). With advance notice, we can provide either an additional 4' or 6' table. All tables are 30" deep and cost \$75.

### **Extra Badges**

Each Supporter Sponsor gets two badges for the Vendor Showcase. Partner Sponsors receive three badges. All vendor attendees must have a badge. Additional badges will be available at vendor check-in on the morning of Friday, August 4. Extra badges are \$200 and can be paid for via credit card at the registration table.

### **Lanyards**

In the past, NCG has provided basic badge holders and lanyards for Vendor Showcase attendees. Please feel free to bring your own lanyard or badge holder if you have one. We'll still provide the basic set up for those who need it, but if you have your own branded kit, it's a great way to reduce waste and show off your brand.

### **Swag**

Each co-op attendee receives a SWAG bag upon arrival at Convergence. Contributing to our SWAG bag is a great way to get product into the hands of our buyers at the beginning of our conference, giving them a chance to sample prior to the Vendor Showcase. If you would like to provide swag, download this form , and submit it for approval to Jolene Parker by June 19, 2023.



## **After Show**

### **After-Show Vendor Reports**

Our show portal will close at 11:59 PM CDT, Friday, August 18. The Perenso team will be sending you your brand's report on Wednesday, August 30. We are unable to offer access to the data while the portal is open.

Thank you for your support of Co+nvergence and NCG member co-ops. We look forward to seeing you in August!

# **END**