



National Chamber Program FAQ

Q. What is the National Commerce Group?

The National Commerce Group, a subsidiary of the Detroit Regional Chamber, administers the National Chamber Program. Over the years, the National Chamber Program has grown to be the largest and most successful national affinity program for chambers of commerce. The program provides chambers unique business solutions and access to group purchasing benefits on office supplies through Office Depot.

Q. What is Benefits Corp.?

Benefits Corp. is a San Diego-based, service-oriented marketing company that offers discounted Office Depot products and services to the business community through affiliations with approximately 200 chambers of commerce primarily throughout the Southwest and West Coast.

Q. What changes are taking place at Benefits Corp.?

On Aug. 31, Benefits Corp. and the National Commerce Group announced that the companies have agreed to form one unified Office Depot program, the largest chamber affiliate program of its kind in the United States. Benefits Corp. CEO Carol Thompson will retire from the company.

Moving forward, Heidi Wilcox and Fadi Hamdi of Benefits Corp. will remain in the San Diego office to serve as the core of the National Commerce Group's west region service center and will continue to handle accounts for Benefits Corp. partners.

Q. Is the acquisition complete?

Yes. The shareholders from both organizations approved the purchase agreement effective Aug. 31, 2015.

Q. How will this benefit my organization?

Combined operations create a single nationwide program, which reduces market fragmentation and bolsters the ability of national organizations, such as Office Depot, to incorporate chambers as an important part of their overall marketing strategies. It also provides for greater efficiency and use of resources for chamber affiliates while better aligning the National Chamber Program for the future in light of Staples' pending acquisition of Office Depot.

The ultimate goal of this expansion is to better provide our customers with the most innovative and comprehensive solutions to increase sales and grow their respective Office Depot programs.

Q. How does this impact my affiliation with Benefits Corp. or the National Commerce Group?

Chambers of commerce currently enrolled with Benefits Corp. will now participate through the National Chamber Program. All chamber affiliates can expect the same level of support and resources they have enjoyed, including customized strategies for their respective Office Depot programs.

Q. What impact will this acquisition have on the National Chamber Program?

It enables Office Depot to provide greater support to the combined program. Additionally, Office Depot has amended its agreement with the National Commerce Group to incorporate Benefits Corp. and modernize its contract terms and conditions.

Q. What is the status of existing contracts/rebates under the new organization?

Benefits Corp. will issue rebate/royalty payments and dues to chamber affiliates for Office Depot program sales through Aug. 31. Moving forward, National Commerce Group will assume responsibility to pay rebates/royalties and dues pursuant to Benefits Corp. affiliate contracts.

In order to accommodate changes in Office Depot's contract with the National Commerce Group, each chamber affiliate contract will be updated to reflect the new organizational structure. A member of the National Commerce Group team will contact chambers within the next 45 days to review the revised 2016 affiliate contracts.

Q. Will there be a change to the royalty/rebate payment structure?

No. The current compensation structure will remain the same. For the new contract, chamber affiliates will be asked to sign an agreement to transfer your program to the National Commerce Group from Benefits Corp. National Commerce Group's program differs in some ways from Benefits Corp. Eventually, the programs will be brought into alignment, but any changes, which are not expected in the next 18 months, will be modest in scope and communicated well in advance.

Q. What about exclusivity provisions?

Exclusivity provisions are not part of the current National Commerce Group's affiliate contracts, nor will they be part of future contracts. National Commerce Group is unable to enforce exclusivity provisions with Office Depot contracts. Additionally, with the acquisition of Benefits Corp. there may be territories where the two programs overlap.

Q. What impact does the pending Staples acquisition of Office Depot have on the National Chamber Program?

We will not know for sure until Staples' acquisition of Office Depot is finalized. At this time, National Commerce Group expects that the National Chamber Program will persist if Staples acquires Office Depot. One of the benefits of the acquisition of Benefits Corp. is that it positions the National Chamber Program for a more secure future in a post-Staples/Office Depot program.

Q. Now that the acquisition of Benefits Corp. is complete, what happens next?

Each chamber affiliate will have to execute an amended affiliate contract with the National Commerce Group effective Jan. 1, 2016. A member of the National Commerce Group team will contact chambers within the next 45 days to review the updated affiliate contract.

Q. Who can I contact for additional questions?

For more information, please contact:

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