Focus On The Forest, Not The Trees: A Checklist For Planning Chapter Meetings

CU Health Sciences Library — UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO — ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Lisa K. Traditi, MLS, AHIP
http://hdl.handle.net/10968/1213

Jon Crossno, MLS, AHIP
http://hdl.handle.net/2152.5/3096

UT Southwestern Medical Center

TIMELINE

Year 1	
Invite other chapters	Oct 2011
Convene Steering Committee	Jan 2012
Collect essential information about chapter meetings for comparison	Mar 2012
Contact program planner to select venue	Jun 2012
Draft Memorandum of Understanding	Oct 2012
Review venue options/site visits	Oct 2012
Select venue	Nov 2012
Finalize contract with venue	Dec 2012
Year 2	
Sign Memorandum of Understanding	Jan 2013
Request volunteers from chapters to serve as Chairs or Committee Members	Mar 2013
Request logo/theme ideas from memberships	Mar 2013
Select volunteers from chapters to serve as Chairs or Committee Members	Apr 2013
Establish bank account	May 2013
Seed money sent to Treasurer	Jun 2013
Committee Chairs form committees	Jun 2013
Logo finalized	Jun 2013
MLGSCA/NCNMLG Joint Meeting 2013, San Diego, CA	Jul 24-26, 2013
Conduct Continuing Education Survey	Aug 2013
Select online payment vendor and create account	Aug 2013
Budgets submitted to Treasurer	Sep 2013
Web site launched	Sep 2013
Promotional material developed	Sep 2013
PNCMLA 2013 Annual Meeting, Anchorage, AK	Sep 14-17, 2013
MCMLA 2013 Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, UT	Sep 14-17, 2013
Steering committee extends invitation to MLA Officers	Oct 2013
Save the dates for one year out to all chapters	Oct 2013
SCCMLA 2013 Annual Meeting, Fort Worth, TX	Oct 26-30, 2013
Finalize budget and set registration costs	Nov 2013
Year 3	
Contracts to Plenary and Continuing Education speakers finalized	Jan 2014
Call for posters and papers	Mar 2014
Exhibitor registration launched	Mar 2014
Sponsor solicitation begins	Mar 2014
Registration launched	May 2014
Abstracts for posters and papers due	Jun 2014
Papers and Poster acceptance notifications	Jun 2014
Final Program	Sep 2014
Online Program launched	Sep 2014
Early Bird registration ends	Sep 14, 2014
Last day for meeting registration cancellations and refunds	Sep 14, 2014
Deadline for hotel registration based on hotel's release of room block	Sep 22, 2014
AV equipment/data connection needs and room setup requests due	Sep 2014
Final catering request due to hotel	Oct 9, 2014
Payment due to hotel – 72 hours prior to conference start	Oct 9, 2014
Pre-conference meeting with hotel staff	Oct 2014
Quint*Essential 2014: Convergence & Collaboration	**Oct 12-16, 2014**
Post Conference	
Evaluation survey sent to attendees	Oct 2014
Receive final invoices for meeting expenses	Nov 2014
Review conference evaluations	Nov 2014
Survey of non-attendees	Nov 2014
Final committee reports	Dec 2014
Year 4	
Final overall report submitted to chapters & digital repository	Mar 2015
Thank you letters sent to committee chairs and members	Mar 2015

PLANNING JOINT CHAPTER MEETINGS CHECKLIST

☐ Form an official steering committee for the meeting, which should include (at least) the following:
- One individual from each participating chapter (serves as the official liaison to that chapter)
- The meeting treasurer (should be someone local to the meeting)

Leadership of the steering committee (preferably co-chairs) should be identified from this pool.

☐ Use spreadsheet to collect essential information about regular chapter meeting.

Information to collect includes the following:
- *Seed money from chapter*
- *Length of conference (number of days)*
- *Opening reception*
- *Closing reception*
- *Poster session(s)*
- *Paper session(s)*
- *Vendors (number of days for exhibit hall)*
- *Charge for vendor booths*
- *Pre-conference CEs (number?)*
- *Post-conference CEs (number?)*
- *CE costs*
- *Registration costs*
- *Meeting rooms*
- *Total attendance (not including vendors)*
- *Total sleeping room nights*
- *Hotel rate for sleeping rooms*
- *Related organizations that need meeting space*

☐ Prepare a "Memorandum of Understanding" that clearly defines the following:
- Participating chapters
- Guidelines for the official steering committee, including governance and any related committees
- Seed money from each chapter
- Financial expectations (net profit/loss) for the meeting, including any necessary calculations (e.g., divide profits by the relative percentage of each chapter's attendance, accept loss by the relative percentage of each chapter's total membership on a given date)

☐ Identify general target dates for meeting in order to start locating hotel/meeting space.

Use length of conference, total attendance, total sleeping room nights, and meeting rooms from spreadsheet to help narrow down what is needed. Be sure to get __accurate__ (not "pie-in-the-sky") attendance figures.

☐ Set an overall budget for the meeting that would include the expected income and cover the basic costs. Ideally, the intent for the meeting it to (at least) break-even.

The budget will likely evolve over time as more things are identified, but this sets a baseline.

All meeting expenses are expected to be paid before assessing the net profit/loss. This also includes paying back the seed monies to each chapter.

☐ Select hotel/meeting space and finalize hotel contract.

The contract should include complimentary rooms based on the number of sleeping room nights that are filled (e.g., 1 comp room for every 45 room nights). These can be used to fulfill contracted lodging needs for plenary speakers, CE instructors, and/or other invited guests.

Add pre- and post-days to the primary room block reservation at the negotiated room rate, if possible, to accommodate early arrivals and late departures (and if meeting content needs to be added before/after the primary meeting dates).

Try to reserve as much meeting space as possible. It's generally easier to release rooms if they are not needed for the actual meeting than it is to add rooms (at the last minute) when you discover you need them.

Be certain to clarify __in advance__ what is required for state/federal tax documentation as soon as possible.

☐ Solicit committee volunteers as soon as possible from all participating chapters.

☐ Define goals and responsibilities for committees.

☐ Identify potential committee chairs with demonstrated past experience in planning meetings.

Appoint co-chairs as much as possible to divide the workload and guarantee effective communication with other committees.

If a potential co-chair does not have demonstrated past experience, then it is especially important to pair him/her with someone who does.

☐ Ensure representation from all chapters on all committees. (Note: Some committees will have a more "local" focus.)

☐ Provide a central site to facilitate sharing documents and other information.

☐ Set a regular meeting schedule. If possible, use an online conference call system (e.g., ReadyTalk, GoToMeeting, Skype) to facilitate the meeting.

If the system allows for screen sharing, then that is ideal. This way, if something needs to be demonstrated (e.g., registration form draft, evaluation questions), then everyone has a chance to see them.

Assign someone to take minutes; these can also be displayed to attendees (when nothing else needs to be demonstrated) to ensure that the information is being accurately recorded. The minutes can then be shared and viewed by anyone who was unable to attend.

☐ Establish appropriate deadlines for committees and obtain proposed budgets – with conservative estimates.

Major program decisions (i.e., general schedule blocks) should be decided by the steering committee, and the program subcommittee should be tasked with filling those blocks with speakers/content.

Decisions about online access to presentation materials should be made early so that an appropriate storage location and plan can be identified and all presenters can be notified in advance.

Continuing education needs and dates should be determined as early as possible.

☐ Address important committee tasks as they occur, such as the following:
- Allow ample time for design and testing of evaluation forms. Be sure to carefully consider what needs to be collected and what intends to be done with the data.
- Limit the number of registration types (and related fees) as much as possible.
  ○ Should guests have their own registration type and be required to register?
- Paper sessions should be scheduled in rooms close to one another, if possible, to facilitate moving easily from one session to another.
  ○ The program schedule should also indicate the expected start and end times for all papers, and moderators should be expected to adhere to the posted schedule.
- Posters should be on display for as long as possible; if possible, they should be displayed for the duration of the meeting, not just for the day when they will be staffed.
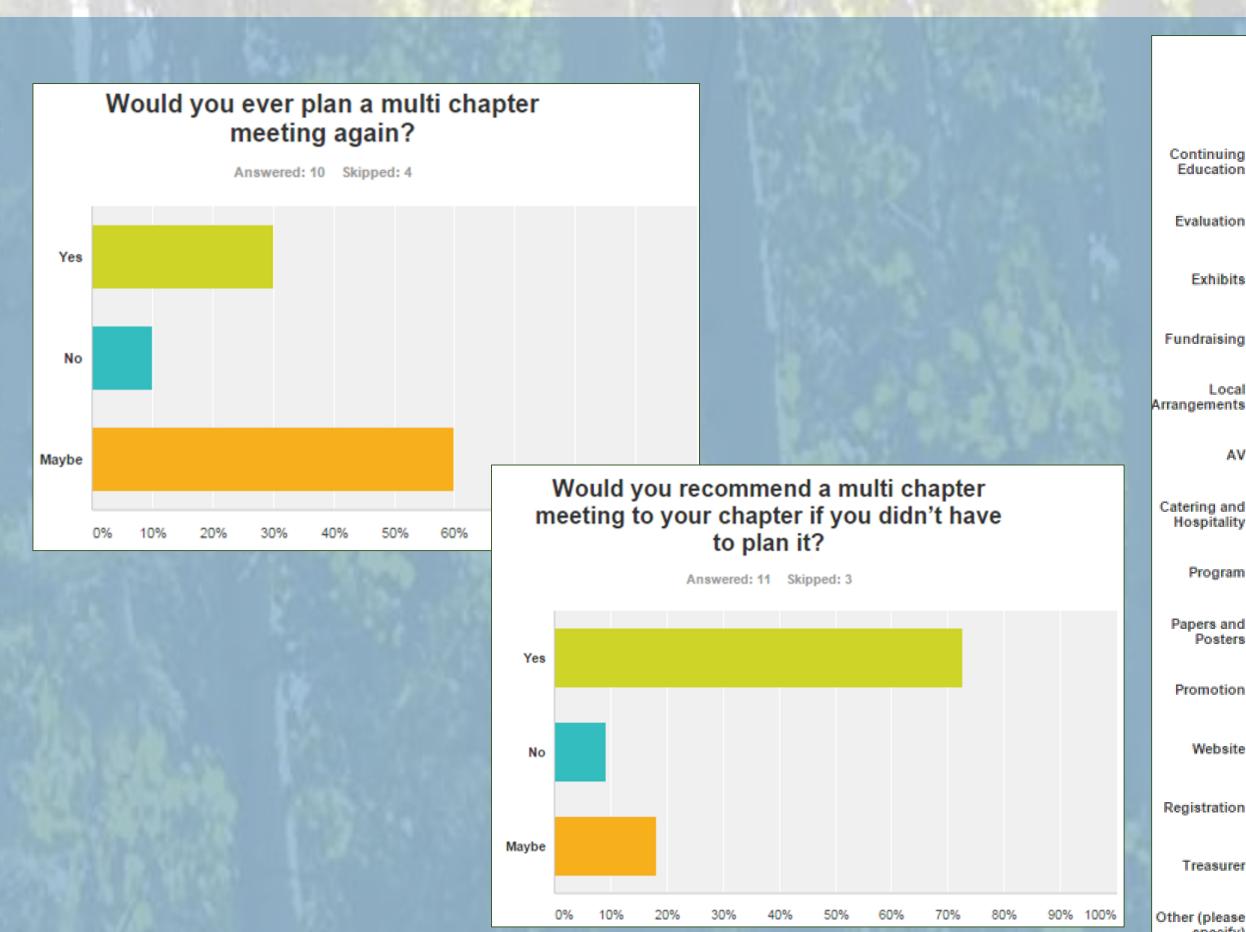 ○ IMPORTANT: Verify with the venue that the poster display space is confirmed for the entire meeting time.
- Communicate with plenary speakers, CE instructors, and other invited guests as often as possible to ensure that their needs are being met and to address any questions or concerns.
- Identify an individual(s) to act as a liaison to CE instructors on the day of their classes.
  ○ Preferably, the liaison should be a member of the CE committee, but if committee members are not available, then perhaps an attendee in each class can be identified to fill the role.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Would you have found a manual helpful?
What do you wish you'd known from the beginning?

Yes, our manuals were very helpful. I wish we had known a lot of things. Did you know that the word "contributed paper session" doesn't mean the same thing in all chapters? Did you know that tax exempt status varies from state to state and get especially complicated when you're outside your geographic region? Did you know that the other chapter gets upset if you don't plan a full breakfast ? There's so much that is assumed doesn't necessarily carry over from chapter to chapter.

Would you ever plan a multi chapter meeting again?
Answered: 10 Skipped: 4

Would you recommend a multi chapter meeting to your chapter if you didn't have to plan it?
Answered: 11 Skipped: 3

What committees did you have?
Answered: 9 Skipped: 5
(Continuing Education, Evaluation, Exhibits, Fundraising, Local Arrangements, AV, Catering and Hospitality, Program, Papers and Posters, Promotion, Website, Registration, Treasurer, Other (please specify))

*Special thanks to the Committee Chairs and Steering Committee of Quint*Essential: Convergence & Collaboration 2015.*