

4. MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Once you have been awarded the regional meeting by your Regional Board, you will work with your ACS meeting planner to determine the proper venue for your meeting.

SELECTING A LOCATION

Your ACS meeting planner will assist you with preparing an RFP (Request for Proposal) that will sent out through your local Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to potential facilities in your area. Once the proposals have been received, you and your ACS meeting planner will visit the most promising properties, weigh their potential and pricing, and determine the best fit for your meeting. To do this effectively, you need to have some idea of what your meeting will look like: approximately how many symposia and general sessions; special events; the exhibition, and special workshops or programs. All of this will determine your physical space requirements when reviewing the potential properties.

The Facility Contract

Once a decision has been made on which property is best, your ACS meeting planner will assist you with negotiating the final contract. NEVER sign any contract that will pertain to your meeting without having your ACS meeting planner review it first.

The contract specifies several deadlines that require decisions on the part of the committee on how to proceed, and the need to notify the meeting site of those decisions. These dates must be incorporated into the meeting timeline.

There will be stipulations in the contract that will impact on your planning—your allotted meeting space, possible food and beverage minimum requirements, possible AV and other outside vendor restrictions, and of course your room block. Your ACS meeting planner is available to assist the Arrangements Chair on all aspects of the logistics process, e.g., contract negotiations, identifying A/V needs, estimating food and beverage orders, and supplying contact information for potential vendors in these areas..

The Arrangements Chair

The committee should next appoint an Arrangements Chair who will serve as liaison with your meeting facility's Convention Services Manager (CSM). This person's responsibilities include:

- All meeting rooms,
- A/V requirements,
- transportation,
- food and beverage,
- special food or equipment needs, and
- special event requests.

If the meeting site is on a campus, it is recommended that the Arrangements Chair, or Associate Chair, should be a member of the faculty. This enables the chair to utilize benefits the school offers to employees.

It is imperative that all committees work through the Arrangements Chair in communicating with the meeting facility to avoid confusion for the facility staff, to keep the Arrangements Chair informed, and to control the budget.

MEETING ROOM SET-UP STYLES

The Arrangements Chair should give the facility contact person specific written instructions for room assignments and set-ups for all sessions, meals, and special events. A simple function grid listing day, time and location of meeting activities, set-up requirements and any food and beverage needed is useful for both the facility and the meeting organizers.

There are three basic meeting room set-up styles:

1. *Theater Style* is the most common type of room set for larger meetings, with rows of chairs and a wide center aisle. The viewing screen is placed in the front of the room for greatest visibility.
2. *Schoolroom Style*, also called *Classroom Style*, consists of rows of narrow tables with two or three chairs set on one side facing a head table.
3. *Conference Style* is used for smaller meetings, where attendees are expected to participate in the discussion. There are a number of different types of conference styles, the basic one being a rectangular, oval or round table surrounded by chairs. Other conference types include *Hollow Square* or *Rectangle*, where the center is left open; and the *"U" Shape*, where one side of the square or rectangle is left open. There are no aisles in conference style sets so the AV is always set on a stand near the table, and the screen at the end of the room near the head table. No equipment should be set in the middle of the hollow square because it blocks the participants' view of each other and creates logistical problems in operating the equipment.
4. *Rounds* are round tables with tablecloths used for dining events and can be set in numbers up to 10 per table, comfortably.

Diagrams of these set-ups may be found at the end of this chapter.

POSTER SESSIONS

Poster sessions should be set up in a large room or open area to accommodate rows of 6' x 4' double sided board. Poster boards will most likely need to be rented; but, they can sometimes be obtained through a university. When getting price quotes for the poster boards, make sure that delivery, set-up, and tear down are included.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

There are several types of events at regional meetings requiring food and beverage orders. Your ACS meeting planner can assist you in estimating how much to order, and the cost per person. These events include:

AM and PM Coffee Breaks with coffee, tea, juices, and soft drinks are usually placed where they will attract attendees to the exhibits.

Mixers or Receptions may or may not include alcoholic beverages. Budgetary concerns are part of that decision, as is whether it is a student mixer. Some committees provide one free drink ticket at a cash bar setup. Others may provide soft drinks, beer, and wine either as an open or cash bar. Always order "on consumption". That means you only pay for what is used. Local liquor laws must be observed and are often of particular concern at campus meetings.

Luncheons and/or dinners are ticketed events, and the ticket price should include tax and service charge. Round up the price to the nearest amount ending in 0 or 5. Facilities usually require the menu selections 30 to 90 days in advance, with an estimate of attendees. They require a guarantee three business days in advance of the meal, which means the Arrangements chair will have to confirm with the facility before the meeting opens. The final guarantees are based on advance registration figures and how many tickets will be sold onsite.

On university campuses, a guarantee to the cafeteria may be required, on which they will base daily food preparation. Registrants may have to purchase meal tickets in advance. This can be added to the advance registration form. You may wish to hold a few tickets for last-minute special guests.

When selecting menus, the budget restraints have to be weighed against the food & beverage spending requirements of the facility. Helpful hints on planning your functions are included under this tab.

MENU PLANNING TIPS

Contact the facility's catering department and request a copy of its menus. Discuss the event with them. Often, they can make suggestions that will improve the event, and save money.

When planning menus try to achieve a balance of flavors, textures, shapes, and colors. Avoid foods that are too rich, spicy, or salty. Vegetarian options are always available.

Breakfast—Buffet service saves time for attendees planning to attend technical sessions. There are several options for breakfast: continental, an upgraded continental with cereals, and the hot breakfast. The advantage of the continental breakfast is that any leftover breads and fruits can be served at a mid-morning coffee break.

Coffee Breaks— Serve coffee, tea, and/or juices, water, soft drinks (afternoon break). Order coffee, tea, and juices by the gallon (estimate 20 cups per gallon), soda and juices on consumption, and food items by the piece or dozen. Avoid per person orders as they tend to cost

more. Order pitchers of water rather than bottles. To figure your break order, see the Meeting Planner Reference Guide at the end of this chapter.

Lunches—Keep lunches light as heavy foods lead to mid-afternoon drowsiness. Consider salads, sandwiches, quiche, soup and broiled fish or chicken. You can lower the cost of the meal by dropping the soup/salad and/or dessert.

Receptions—Your budget determines how elaborate to make a reception. A reception can be held to welcome attendees to the meeting, honor award winners or a special guest at the meeting, draw attendees into the exhibit area, or an opportunity to gather before a dinner. Receptions can have alcohol, appetizers, desserts, coffee, wine and beer, soft drinks, or light snacks. The menu sets the tone of the gathering. If you wish to serve alcohol, consider offering one free drink ticket to attendees, with a cash bar and bartender available if people wish to have another drink. Request the facility charge by consumption, i.e., only by what was actually consumed at the event rather than by bottle.

Banquets—If you want to present something a little more special than the printed menu offers, talk with the facility banquets staff. They may be able to provide that for you at little or no additional cost using foods in season. Also ask them if they have table decorations available to dress up the setting for the event. They usually do have items they can supply with little or no charge.

AUDIO/VISUAL SUPPORT

The hosting facility may be able to provide A/V support in-house. However, get at least three bids from outside A/V companies or borrow equipment from a local institution. Be sure that all equipment is in good working condition. If a contractor is hired, be sure all requirements are outlined in the contract. In either case, an on-site technician should be provided or students hired to help operate the equipment and keep it functioning. If you plan to bring equipment onsite, check with the meeting facility to see if it is permitted.

Standard A/V Equipment for a session room includes:

- ◆ Screen, 6-ft. or larger
- ◆ LCD
- ◆ Pointer
- ◆ Small table and a chair for organizer at the front of the room
- ◆ Microphone as necessary (rooms over 50 people)

Review abstract forms for special equipment requests. Speakers may request:

- ◆ Blackboards/Chalk, Whiteboards/Flipcharts w/markers
- ◆ Microphones
- ◆ VCR and Monitor
- ◆ Telephone lines (for computer demos)
- ◆ Data projector

MEETING SIGNAGE

Proper signage is vital to the success of your meeting, as many attendees will be visiting the site for the first time. Hotels may list the day's events on an in-house TV system and/or event board. If so, provide a schedule of each day's events in detail to the hotel staff person to ensure the correct listing of your meeting schedule.

At the Meeting Location

In addition to signage, you should supply your hotel front desk and concierge staff with copies of your program/abstract book and any directional information that might be helpful. If you are meeting on a campus, supply appropriate campus staff with this information.

The ACS Department of Meetings and Exposition Services will provide the interior signage frames and easels for your meeting and a template for making signs.

Directional Signs

For meetings held on college campuses, large roadside directional signs that point the way through campus to the parking area and meeting site are a necessity. Signs should be made with a light background and dark, bold lettering for ease in reading. These signs need to:

- ◆ Indicate the campus entrance attendees should use
- ◆ Direct attendees to the proper parking areas, dormitories (if you are using them) and the building housing sessions
- ◆ Direct attendees on foot across campus to sessions and to special events
- ◆ Be large enough to read clearly from some distance—at least two feet high.

TOURS

When arranging a tour for your meeting, consider the interests of your region. Tours of scientific interest, such as local industries affiliated with chemistry, can be quite popular, especially if they are scheduled to take a minimum of time away from the sessions.

A special location for a dinner or reception at a popular tourist site might get a good response if the price is reasonable and it can be held after sessions are over for the day. Several meetings have hosted events at science museums or aquariums. Most important, however, is that the cost of a special event must pay for itself and not become a money-loser for the meeting. Work with your local Convention and Visitors Bureau to obtain information about local attractions.

A more cost-effective alternative would be to get more creative with the banquets and/or receptions you are planning and invest your funds into making those events more exciting.