



## *Conference Planning Guide*

### *9 to 12 Months Prior to Your Event*

#### *Create a committee*

- Define each person's responsibilities clearly in writing
- Decide who has final say and make sure everyone knows
- Provide orientation, training and motivation
- Remember to thank all people assisting regularly

#### *Define your conference purpose & objectives*

- Purpose should be clear and measurable and consistent with the organization's goals
- Put purpose in writing for the planning team
- Communicate in your event promotion calendar

#### *Plan a program*

- Make sure everyone knows objectives (speakers, leaders, etc.)
- Suggest topic to speakers or make sure they can address a subject before engaging their services
- Plan and define your needs: audio and visual needs with speakers, signage, handouts, registration desk, any other special needs

#### *Identify locations that meet your needs*

- Consider accessibility and travel time for attendees, age of group, etc.
- Consider guestroom accommodations, function room needs, meeting setups, rules and policies of the facility, types of menus, meals & snacks, and level of service
- Review agreement / contract with planning team so everyone knows details
- Create budget and set registration fees – Important to set fees so the event pays for itself with added money for unexpected needs in planning or on-site expenses

### *6 to 9 Months Prior to Your Event*

#### *Begin promoting*

- Define attendee cancellation policies, registration process, forms and fees, payment policy
- Feature the event in your organization's newsletter, website, and other forms of communication with your potential attendees.
- Acquire speaker information for your brochure for distribution to your potential attendees.
- Offer incentives for "Early Bird" registration with deposits (your contracted package pricing)
- Offer higher pricing for registration and deposit between 3-6 months in advance and an added surcharge to the price for any registrations within 4 weeks of your event.

*Review your contract and addendums with your conference center services coordinator.*

*Discuss delivery dates for your event:*

- Function room agenda, meal & snack break schedule
- Rooming list and conference center rooming list format
- Deposit schedule
- Cancellation policy and minimum guarantees
- Advance team and VIP requirements - rooms for early check in and late check out

*Other arrangements to discuss include:*

- Free time activity needs – swimming pool, fitness center, nature trail, bookstore, local shops, adventure recreation opportunities, etc.
- Travel arrangements for attendees (car, bus, airlines, etc.)
- Arrangements for any children attending
- Anticipated day guest attendance and their potential meal needs
- Anticipated additional meeting rooms needed
- Any special activity requests (bon fire, staff led hikes, etc.)
- Any special requests or arrangements

### *3 to 6 Months Prior to Your Event*

- Begin to acquire names (and addresses if needed) of attendees to create the rooming list for submission to the conference center. Typically due four (4) weeks prior to your group's arrival date. (Did you receive your rooming list form?)
- Plan function room setups. Discuss options with the conference center services coordinator.
- Begin to plan audio visual equipment and services needs. Discuss options with your conference center services coordinator.
- Discuss Conference Center Onsite Rules and Policies regarding food, signage and use of ministry props like candles. These rules and policies are designed to protect guests, employees and the facilities from danger and damage. Don't purchase candles or other items without ensuring they comply with the conference center's safety requirements.

*Discuss with your conference center services coordinator any special needs your group may have while onsite.*

- Food menus, vegetarian meals, special dietary needs, etc.
- Snack breaks
- Dining room centerpieces
- Special decorations or signage
- Registration tables and chairs
- Exhibitor / sponsor tables / chairs and their location
- VIP accommodations
- Cots, cribs, handicap rooms, wheelchairs, etc.
- Special celebrations (birthdays, etc.)

### 1 Month Prior to Your Event

- Have you returned the tentative rooming list to the Conference Center?  
**Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you discussed your minimum guarantee with your conference services coordinator?  
*Payment is typically due prior to group arrival and check in.*
- Have you communicated to your attendees the contractual check in?
- Have you communicated to your attendees the conference center policies and rules of conduct?
- Will you need a registration table outside of your meeting room?
- Have you sent your program itinerary / agenda to your conference center service coordinator?
- Have you communicated your conference goals to your conference center service coordinator so they can offer suggestions on how to enhance the attendee experience within a conference theme, etc.?
- If sending any materials in advance...
  - Communicate the size, number of boxes and target delivery date.
  - Where do you want them delivered on your arrival / setup date?

### 1 Week Prior to Your Event

- Have you returned the final rooming list to the Conference Center?  
**Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_. (Please remember that there may be late fees.)
- What is the estimated arrival time for your group planner(s)?
- Have you clearly communicated to your attendees the check in and check out times?
- What is your updated final count?

### Event Day of Arrival

- Meet with the conference center service coordinator to provide final payment
- Final review of the conference center service coordinator's instructions for function room setups, meals, snack break times, etc. and make final changes
- Pick up guestroom keys for VIP's, leadership or planning team staff rooms

### Post-Event: Evaluation and Follow-up

- Solicit attendee feedback on:
  - Location and facility
  - Food & snack offerings
  - Service
  - Program content and spiritual relevance
  - Did the conference meet the original stated objectives?
- Compile a written report for use in planning future conferences
- Thank you notes to all volunteer staff who worked on pre-planning and onsite logistics