TEAM ND
MEETING PLANNING RESOURCES

FAQ

When should I start planning for my event?

This depends on the size and complexity of the event. How far out do you need to book meeting space for optimal dates? Is this an annual event that needs to be announced at the previous year's event? There are some events where the planning cycle never ends. You move from planning to execution to recap back to planning without a break. Others can be planned three months out.

What are best practices for developing a vendor RFP?

Involve your agency's certified Procurement Officer or OMB State Procurement early. Don't reinvent the wheel—use OMB's RFP and contract templates! Use state contracts whenever possible. Clearly define all the services and goods you need. Consider your available budget, the duration of the budget and estimated cost to determine what level of competition is required. Competition thresholds are found at: https://www.nd.gov/omb/agency/procurement. Identify potential bidders. Evaluate bids and proposals based upon the stated evaluation criteria to select the successful vendor. Ensure the contract is signed by both parties before work begins.

Contracts for performers, entertainers and guest speakers do not require competition (Subsection 3 (m) of N.D.A.C. 4-12-09-01). Contracts for education, instruction or training require a procurement process or alternate procurement approved by OMB in advance of the contract award.

Printing has different competition requirements. Agencies can purchase printing from OMB Central Duplicating regardless of the dollar amount. Central Duplicating can do graphic design, print, mail, assemble meeting materials and more. North Dakota has a preference law that requires printing to be obtained from resident bidders. Agencies can purchase printing under $5,000 from commercial printers. Submit a purchase request to OMB State Procurement for printing $5,000 and over.

Do I need to request state rates for state employee attendees? What if the property that best fits our needs does not offer state rate?

Answer: Make every effort to find a venue that offers state rates. If the conference venue will not provide sleeping rooms at the state rates, state employees attending may need to stay at a different hotel that offers state rates. If the conference is in a small city with no other hotels offering state rates, contact OMB Fiscal to request a waiver to pay more than the state rate for lodging.

Do the sleeping rooms need to be direct billed or can individual staff pay for their own rooms?

Rooms should be put on the p-card whenever possible and provide a tax exemption certificate which is available from the ND Tax Department. The agency can pay for rooms on behalf of the state employees using purchasing cards. The employees are responsible for any incidental expenses. If the room is not paid for with a state purchasing card, then the individual state employee must pay and request reimbursement using a travel voucher.

Do I need a production company and if so, how soon should I hire one?

While some smaller meetings and trainings can accomplish their goals by using in-house staff and equipment, many conferences will benefit from hiring a professional production company. These companies provide integrated audio-visual technologies such as lighting, audio, rigging, automation and staging along with innovations like interactive content. Some companies assist with printing, event activation and planning. If hiring a production company, this should be one of the first steps in your planning process. As soon as your venue and dates are set, you should be onboarding a production company. It is critical the production company either has previous knowledge of the venue or takes the time to understand the venue in detail, so giving them the time to do so is very important.

When do you need to add an audio system to a meeting?

Answer: In small meeting rooms, sound reinforcement is usually unnecessary because participants are close enough to hear each other naturally. Sound reinforcement becomes important when people at one end of the room can't comfortably hear those at the other end. This might be due to the size of the room, the seating layout or acoustic conditions. It is critical to test this when you are on a site visit. Another factor is your speaker/presenter and their ability to amplify their voice.

How do I determine my catering guarantee numbers?

Answer: There are many factors that come into play when confirming your catering numbers. The demographics of your attendees (male vs female, dietary restrictions), the location of your venue (are there other options close by), your agenda (length of meal break). In general, you will never have 100% of your attendees eat every meal, so you should never guarantee 100% unless you have RSVPs that tell you differently. Most venues produce a percentage over your guarantee, so make sure you are aware of their policies. One of the best methods to determine your numbers is historical data. Understanding what you actual served at any given meal in previous years will be an incredible help. Venues should communicate this information to you post event. Make sure you get this from them.

How do I determine my room layout?

The room layout is dependent on the goal of the session. Is it meant to be interactive? A hollow square or conference style (depending on the size of session) is recommended. If it is meant to get the most people in the room possible, go with theater style. Do you want a larger room to feel a bit more intimate? Chevron style would work best. Is it an all-day training class? Then classroom style is the way to go. An additional recommendation – when setting up a keynote room, try to not have the aisle run down the center of the room. It adds a layer of difficulty for the keynote speaker to connect to the audience when they are speaking to an aisle.

How do I determine the number of sleeping rooms I need to block?

It is best practice to request a pick-up report from the hotels your group used following your conference. This will provide you with an accurate baseline for future bookings and is especially important if your event is held during a busy time. This history will provide you and the hotel a realistic number to assure your attendees can stay at the conference hotels. Your history may also dictate the dates the room block needs to be available for registration. Most hotels release rooms left in the block two weeks prior to the conference.

How do I determine the correct screen size for my meeting?

Because screens/projection come in all flavors these days (16:9 front projection, 16:9 rear projection, LED screens, 4K, etc....) the accuracy of what you are showing depends on set up. Content plays into this as well. Meaning if you were to show small print, like computer software code, for example, you would want the distance ratio to be lower. If you are showing beautiful photography, you can get away with higher distance ratio (8 -10 x screen height). If the screen was 9' high, then your farthest seat away would be 72'-90'. For smaller print, it would be 45' away. Below is more detail than you may need, but it may come in handy for larger, high production quality events.

Screen Coverage

Distance Ratios:
- Any screen with 1280x720 resolution or less shall have a viewing cone no greater than x7 the screen height, regardless of content.
- Any screen having a resolution of 1920x1080 shall have a viewing cone no greater than x5.5 the screen height, regardless of content.
- The distance of the front row of seats from the main screen shall not be less than the distance from the top of screen image to the floor.
- FOR IMAG SCREENS ONLY: In situations where there is an IMAG only screen, (no data or photographed demo ever displayed – logo OK), the effective viewing distance can be increased to x12. This also applies to IMAG only PiPs.
- Show and notate appropriate PiP sizes/locations to cover the targeted audience number. (These are a guideline to be used by the creative team in formatting content for acceptable sightlines.) The effective viewing distance of the PiPs will determine the need/placement for the possible addition of delay screens in the room.

Viewing Angles:
- All screens shall show a viewing cone of 45 degrees off axis.
- All seats shall be able to see at least one set of paired screens if a four screen (or more) show.
- It is permissible for audience members to look across the stage for a second screen view, if there is nothing impeding that view.
- Unless specifically directed by design, the technical director or client, we default to a four-screen scenario.

Other Notes:

Based on the improvements to brightness capabilities of projectors today, the 45-degree angle of view can be supported in most cases, but the concept of scaling down projectors (e.g., 12K's to dual 6K's) for budget purposes should be considered and reviewed carefully. The 45-degree angle of view works with strong bright projectors and screens with little gain. Smaller projectors should still carry the 30-degree viewing angle consideration.

In some rare instances, you should also pay attention to the front/rear projection influence: front projection will always provide a wider viewing angle; rear projection, especially with .8 lenses, tends to have severe drop-off and hot spotting on large screens that will have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

How do I determine the amount of internet bandwidth I need for my meeting?

Determine how many attendees will be using the internet at your event, assess what your participants will be using the internet for and pay attention to your agenda to determine when the peak usage will be. Most venues have providers that allow the purchase of additional bandwidth if needed.

What is a Pre-Con?

A pre-con refers to a pre-conference meeting. This is an opportunity for you, the meeting planner, to meet with your vendors, venue contacts and suppliers before the program begins (1-2 days before) to review all final logistics and ensure everyone is on the same page. This meeting is traditionally organized and hosted by the venue's convention services manager. They will invite the managers from the various areas of the venue. If you are utilizing vendors outside of the in-house companies, you should make sure they are included. This is the perfect time for you to establish a strong rapport with your event crew.

Event Management Acronyms:

BEO = Banquet Event Orders
AV = Audio Visual
F&B = Food & Beverage
CMP = Certified Meeting Professional
CMM = Certified Meeting Manager
ADR = Average Daily Rate
CSM = Convention Service Manager
CVB = Convention Visitors Bureau
DMC = Destination Management Company
IPO = Individual Pays Own
MOD = Manager on Duty
RFP = Request for Proposal
DOS = Director of Sales
FAM = Familiarization Trip
CAD = Computer Aided Design
B2B = Business to Business
B2C = Business to Consumer
DDR = Daily Delegate Rate
I&D = Installation & Dismantle
NPS = Net Promoter Score
PDR = Private Dining Room
ROI = Return on Investment
CRS = Central Reservation System
HDMI = High-Definition Multimedia Interface
LCD = Liquid Crystal Display
LED = Light Emitting Diode