

Conference Café

EUS Continuing Education Department Newsletter

March, 2006

The Conference Café is a newsletter for EUS ACSs and HPSCs providing articles on different aspects of conference planning, with the emphasis on simplifying wherever possible. Please let us know if you cannot view this newsletter, have suggestions for future articles, or any other questions, by emailing dbaier@mac.com.



In This Issue ...

CED Mini Workshops

Making a Proposed Budget for an Area Conference

Working with the Area Team

We hope this newsletter will simplify the conference planning process, enrich your time as an ACS or HPSC, and bring more joy to the work you do.

So pour a cup of tea, cocoa, or coffee, put up your feet, and please enjoy a break on us as you read!

*Warmly, the EUS
Continuing Education
Department Staff*



2006 CED Mini Workshops

I hope you have made plans to attend one of the three mini workshops for both ACSs and HPSCs this summer. When making your travel plans, please try to arrive on Thursday afternoon—we have pizza, snacks, and an activity planned for Thursday evening at 7:00 as a getting-to-know-you party.

As previously promised, in addition to supplying your dinner Thursday, we'll provide breakfast on Friday and pay half of your room cost for Thursday night.

Please RSVP to Diane Baier with the site you will attend and your discussion preferences. We want this time we spend together to meet your needs and answer any questions you have.



2006 Leader Development Seminars

July 7-9 University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

July 14-16 Furman University, Greenville, SC

July 21-23 Denison University, Granville, OH

It was also previously announced that the newly-revised *Conference Planning Guide* would be distributed at these workshops. Because we want this much-needed resource out as soon as possible, this plan has been revised, and you will be receiving a CD version sometime in April via US mail!

Making a Proposed Budget for an Area Conference

It is the ACS's responsibility to consult with the AFC, ACL, Area Conference Treasurer, and RCA and to create a budget for the upcoming conference. **Financial Worksheet, Form 104** replaces all four previous financial forms and provides a side-by-side budget and final report for a given year.

This form is an Excel spreadsheet that consists of three worksheets—one for Income, one for Expenses, and one for detail of Committee Expenses. It is set up with all formulas for adding/subtracting and figuring final percentages. You can add rows as needed for categories and the formulas will automatically update; plug in numbers and the subtotals and totals are automatically created. Your RCA can help you with using this form for the first time.

When you submit your budget, rename the file **Form 104-B**, and when you add the final amounts to submit it as your Final Report, rename it again as **Form 104-R**. Your completed budget should be sent to the Team and then the RCA for review.

To begin using this form now, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EUS-CED/files> and look in the CPG Forms folder. You will find this helpful tool, as well as the other conference forms, all recently updated.

Tips for budgeting

1. After obtaining exact figures for expenditures from the past Area Conference and filling in the appropriate blanks for your Final Report (if it wasn't done already), you should have a detailed analysis of all expenses and income. This will show how much profit the conference actually had. The ideal gross profit margin is 25-30%. Here is a simple example of how to figure your profit margin:
INCOME - (minus) EXPENSES = PROFIT
PROFIT / (divided by) INCOME = GROSS PROFIT MARGIN
 $500 - 200 = 300$
 $300 / 500 = 60\%$ GROSS PROFIT MARGIN
2. Using the figures from the last conference, fill in projected amounts for your expenses. Use as many actual costs as you know at this time (facility fees, meal costs, speaker fees, etc).
3. You should project expenses higher than expected and income lower, just for safety's sake. There is always at least one unexpected expense.
4. To plan for the number of attendees at your conference, check previous years' registrations and note the growth in the number of Groups. Use these figures to project this year's attendance. Do not forget reduced and complimentary registrations.
5. Enter the estimated figures for the different categories of registrations and the appropriate registration fees. You can play with different fees and see how it affects your bottom line. If complimentary registrations are listed as an expense, they must also be included as income—they should "wash" each other out since this is not a real cost.
6. Count the number of complimentary lunches. Estimate the number of lunches that will be purchased by other registrants. Divide the total number of purchased lunches into the total cost for lunch (food, drink, paper products, tax, gratuity, etc.) to get a per registrant lunch cost. Use this figure as the cost of the lunch that must be passed on to the registrant in order to cover the cost of the complimentary lunches.
7. The registration and meal fees should cover the costs of the conference. If they do not, consider ways of increasing registration income, either by increasing the registration fee, cutting back on the number of reduced or complimentary lunches, or offering incentives to boost attendance.
8. Once the cost of the conference is covered, it is time to start working on the profit. The ideal source for this profit is all of the conference extras: Sales, Exhibits, Ads in the Program Booklet, Bookstore, Raffle, Boutique, etc. Since this income is not always steady, it should not be counted on to cover the cost of the conference.

There are so many variables involved in running an Area Conference that luck really has to be on your side. Any combination of bad weather, sickness, poor attendance, or any other factors beyond your control will render the most carefully planned figures worthless. Take solace in the fact that, given the tools of the *Conference Planning Guide* and past Area Conference reports, you have done your best to ensure the success of your Area Conference. And remember that a budget is your best guess, not a guarantee.

After You Budget—Your Next Step: Save!

Depending on the financial viability of your Area, and the bottom line of the budget you have created, you might consider:

- Pare down all unnecessary expenses by trimming away items which are nice, but nonessential, such as: elaborate decorations, expensive gifts, expensive lodging, elaborate printing, fancy name tags, and purchased snacks.
- Use email whenever possible for communication.
- Watch for donation possibilities and seek cash donations. Look for exhibitor sponsors for receptions, coffee breaks and other F&B events.
- Consider carefully all the costs for outside speakers such as honorariums, lodging, travel, and meals before deciding to invite them. Try to "piggy-back" speakers with other events (an HPS or another Area/organization nearby) to share travel costs.
- Think about possible added expense before implementing:
 - General sales (T-shirts, tote bags, pictures, buttons, etc.)
 - Socials or Banquets
- Use the Web and email as a key component of meeting promotion.
- Use the Web for registration—reducing data entry costs and errors.
- Use Groups, Chapters, and neighboring Areas to get ads in newsletters or fliers.
- Issue press releases to increase attendance.
- Offer discount for early registration, and institute cancellation fees.

AFCs and Area Conference Treasurers should receive this newsletter and the **Financial Worksheet, Form 104** from their support person.

Making your team work, part II—Working with the Area Team

Part I of this article focused on recruiting, delegating to, and empowering the conference committee team. In this part we will cover the ACS's important relationship with Area Team members and specific things that the Team should be consulted on with regard to Area Conference planning.

Across the EUS there are 18 different Area Teams, made up of talented, caring women; and each with different dynamics and ways of working together. You may be a brand-new ACS who is trying to find your fit into this Team, or an experienced one who is working to help your Team welcome other new members or learn to work together better. In all of these cases it helps to begin with an agreement to treat each other with respect and that if you disagree it will *still* be with respect.

With the advent of email communication, messages can be sent in the blink of an eye—which can often be a drawback. It can be all too easy to send a message or answer that is not respectful and that you might wish you could retract later. Take the time to respond to email messages, especially if relationships are already strained. Remember that there is a real person on the receiving end of your message—think of what you might say if you were face to face. You can use your RCA as a sounding board to review messages if you are feeling particularly emotional about an issue. This outside review could help to soften your message so you can be heard.

Attributes of Successful Team Players

- ◆ **Like, trust, and respect others.** The members of the most effective teams feel positively toward one another, value each others' views, and know they can depend on one another. They try to resolve problems and promote team success.
- ◆ **Support and help others.** They are willing to go beyond the boundaries of their own tasks and successes and job descriptions. They help when asked and offer assistance unprompted. They share information freely, provide emotional support to each other, praise each other, and attempt to relieve each other's pressures and frustrations. They are concerned about the morale and performance of the entire group.
- ◆ **Understand and appreciate each other's roles.** They build on others' contributions, adjust their own schedules when needed, and are familiar with others' work and personal needs.
- ◆ **Communicate effectively.** They listen empathetically, ignore distractions, respond without defensiveness, and don't allow biases to color the messages they send or receive. They ask and answer questions carefully and openly. They are aware of possible communication barriers.
- ◆ **Openly confront problems and know how to resolve conflict.** Good team members recognize the interdependence of the team, and they help to identify and solve problems, utilizing compromise and consensus. Instead of a win/lose approach, they seek to integrate the resources and positions of all involved. They see conflict as natural, and as a potential source of opportunity.
- ◆ **Know that working on a team isn't all work.** Capable team players know that the social element of work is part of the group process. Humor helps to relieve tension and boredom, keeps wits sharp, and even helps team members understand each other's perspectives. Sensitive team members have a good sense of timing, and know when humor is appropriate and when it is not.
- ◆ **Have a clear "big picture" perspective.** The most valuable members of a team can think in terms of how the participants' roles contribute to the overall goals. Team players gain satisfaction from group success rather than individual success.
- ◆ **Attend to group process.** Continuously monitor the way the team is working as a team. Effective team players are aware of the human interaction and how it affects the group's success; they try to resolve problems and help others improve their team-playing skills.

Teamwork

As the ACS or HPSC, you have the ultimate responsibility for the success of the event you are planning. This doesn't mean you work in a vacuum from the rest of the Team, however. The **ACS Job Description** has been recently updated to clarify the specific things the ACS and the Team should work together on. They are listed below. Remember that every member of the Area Team has the same basic goal for your Area Conference as you—for it to be an amazing, successful educational event for parents and Leaders.

The ACS, in collaboration:*

- With the Area Team, with consideration to prior conference evaluations, chooses the conference options best suited to the Area's needs.



On Simplicity

"I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures." Lao Tzu



When you blame someone, you get resistance. But if you take responsibility for repairing a rift, you form a team.

