Schedule for Planning a Scientific Conference

*** this is the result of several people's experience, but if anyone would like to modify this, please email Steve Sheppard at the CSA office ***

Two Years before hosting the scientific conference:
- Identify the co-chairs for the conference.
- Select and confirm the location of the conference including the conference rooms and personal accommodation such as University residences and/or hotels. Ensure that the location can adequately handle the expected audience and that all necessary rooms and accommodation are adequate. Take into consideration the age of facilities, quality of accommodations, and air conditioning as required. It is recommended that all conference sessions be held in the same facility preferably in adjacent conference rooms on the same floor. This provides a venue for easy interaction with conference delegates in various disciplines. It is recommended that the largest room available be used for the poster presentation room.
- Advertise the proposed date and location of the conference to the respective membership of interested organizations and scientific societies.

Sixteen months before the conference:
- Identify the **conference committee** chair people. These people should meet with the current year's conference committee members for their suggestions on operating the annual scientific conference. The conference committee should consist of 5 members; two people acting as co-chair (who share responsibilities including financial chair), a fundraising and promotions/advertising chair, a program chair, and a local arrangements chair. In addition, a paid (part time) conference secretary should be identified for receiving and processing the individual conference registrations and assisting in the clerical work associated with the conference.

One year before the conference:
- The various chair persons should meet with the previous year's conference committee to obtain their suggestions and recommendations, copies of their proposed and actual budget, as well as their sponsor mailing list, banking procedures, and the transfer of credit card information to the new conference committee.

Ten months before the conference:
- Hold the first main conference committee meeting. All the respective chair persons need to identify the members of their committee.
- The local arrangements chair and committee should re-confirm all conference facilities and personal accommodation (hotels/residence).
- The program chair must organize a committee that consists of one person representing each different topic area to be presented at the conference. For an Animal Science conference these topics might be genetics, ruminants, non-

ruminants, meat, pasture, etc. In addition a sub-chair, within the program committee needs to be identified to be responsible for the editing and publishing the scientific papers, abstracts and organizing the poster sessions.

- The program chair and committee has the greatest roll to play in organizing the conference. They should decide if there will be a conference "Theme", a "Plenary Session" on a topic of current interest to the majority of the prospective delegates and/or a series of "Symposiums" on various topics. If speakers are to be invited to present research findings or reviews at the conference they need to be identified and contacted at this time.
- If conference letterhead paper is required it should be designed and printed at this time. The conference committee co-chairs are responsible for this.

Eight to nine months before the conference:
- All the invited speakers need to be confirmed by the program committee. It is recommended that the conference committee co-chair(s) be responsible for writing the official letter of invitation. This should be done after the program committee has made initial contact and confirmation with the individual speakers.
- The conference committee financial and co-chair(s) need to establish a bank account, credit card payment system for registration payments and request a cash advance (repayable) of approximately $5000 from the parent society executive.
- The conference committee financial and co-chair(s) need to decide on the method of reimbursing the invited speakers for travel expenses. It is recommended that a lump sum be given to each speaker upon receipt of their scientific paper for the conference proceedings to cover their travel expenses. This alleviates the unexpected additional travel expenses that might occur. In addition the travel costs of getting to and from the airports, the lodging and meal expenses to cover the time at the conference plus limited incidentals should be included. In order to arrive at the lump sum payment a travel consultant should be hired to estimate the air fares of each speaker on a Saturday night stay over vs. a mid-week travel plan. The most reasonable travel plan can then be suggested to the invited speaker, a lump sum agreed upon and the speaker arranges their own travel arrangements as required. The conference committee co-chair would then invite the speaker for the confirmation of the speaker's agreement to these travel arrangements. The invited speakers should be informed of the due date for their scientific paper and that their "Word" document file name should include their full name for easy identification. The invoice to pay for the speakers travel costs should state "Travel Costs" and not indicate anything regarding an honorarium as this will have tax implications. It will be necessary to check with an accountant or tax consultant for additional information on paying a lump sum to cover the travel costs.

Six to seven months before the conference:
- **Call for papers**
  - **The conference committee** should present and advertise the proposed program, identifying the invited speakers, topics, sessions, and symposiums etc. In addition the call for volunteer papers (oral and poster)

should be advertised and distributed to the general membership and other interested organizations, other scientific societies, federal and provincial researchers and agrologists and applicable department heads.

- o The submitted abstracts should contain the presenting authors name as a means of file identification. It is recommended that posters be in the **vertical** format in order to effectively utilize the available poster boards.
- o Instructions on length and style of abstract and using the presenting authors name as the electronic "Word" file identification should be included in the information package.

- **Registration**
  - o **The conference committee** ensures that the registration form is circulated to the general membership and other interested organizations, federal and provincial agrologists from across Canada including applicable department heads. The registration form should outline the conference program, early registration fees, normal registration fees, one day registration fee, all meals and banquet costs, indication of any special diet needs, along with the conference registration address and fax number and email address.
  - o The conference information package should be posted on the parent society's web site; e.g.: Can. Soc. Animal Sc. or Can. Soc. of Agronomy, or Can. Soc. Soil Sc. An email message should be sent to the membership indicating the posting of this information on the respective web sites.

- **Sponsorship**
  - o **Fundraising and promotion/advertising committee** should develop a proposed sponsorship contact list based on previous conferences and general industry and funding agencies interest. Initial sponsorship request letters should be sent at least **6 months** before the conference for this request to be included into the sponsor's annual budgeting process. The proposed conference program should be included in addition to an outline of the benefits to the sponsor such as current up dates on applicable research, contact with the researchers, summaries of the research information, etc., etc. If at all possible, personal contact (telephone) with the sponsoring organization is extremely beneficial. A follow up letter should be sent 2 to 3 months prior to the conference.

- **Meals**
  - o **The local arrangement committee** need to plan and confirm all meal and banquet menus and costs with the caterers. It is recommended that a person from the local arrangements committee be delegated as **Food Manager** and be responsible for all dealings with the caterers. Include in the meal costs any gratuities and taxes. Negotiate a confirmed price on all meals with the caterer for the conference date. Try and plan a varied menu and include a possible "Wine and Cheese" type of reception on the first evening of the conference as a get acquainted event. The catering manager will have menu suggestions. Indicate to the caterers that all delegates will need to be served at banquets or processed through the food lines in 20 minutes in order to keep the event running on schedule. Meal

tickets should be used and it will be necessary to negotiate with the catering company to charge on the actual number of meal tickets collected for each meal.

- **Entertainment**
    - o **Local arrangements committee** should book any entertainment. If special outside events are planned you will need to have alternative arrangements in case of inclement weather. Check with the University, catering department, hotels, and liquor board officials on any legal or management restrictions on the special events.

Three months before the conference:
- **The program committee and the proceedings committee** will need to contact a CD duplication company and printing company that should be booked ahead in order to have copies of the proceedings completed 4 weeks before for the conference. The sponsorship committee should assign one contact person to gather all the information regarding sponsorship information and advertising materials for the proceedings. The cutoff date for all materials to be printed in the proceedings should be 1 month prior to printing. This would give adequate time for distributing the proceedings for proof reading.

Two months before the conference:
- **Program Committee:**
    - o All invited papers should be received by the **program committee** for initial review and corrections before printing in the proceedings. These papers should be reviewed by members of the program committee responsible for the various sessions. It will be necessary to confirm or match the title of the received invited papers and associated authors with those on the conference program. The invited papers can be organized in a searchable form and distributed on a CD at a very low cost.
    - o The **committee co-chair and program chair** should finalize the conference program and re-circulate it to the membership and other interested organizations via the society's web sites.
- **Local Arrangements Committee:**
    - o Locate a source of poster boards. Some universities have limited numbers. Special conference rental companies will also have access to additional poster boards. Assign the larges room available for the poster presentation room and leave the posters up as long as possible.
    - o Identify a person to be responsible for all the **poster sessions.** This will include obtaining all necessary poster boards and identifying the location of each poster on each board with the master poster list as defined by topic and session in the proceedings. The posters should remain on the poster boards during the entire conference. It will be necessary to inform the authors when the posters should be up and taken down and the method of attaching the poster to the board. A contact person needs to be present at the time of poster set up to clarify any problems with the master poster index list. Additional Velcro and stick pins will be required.

- o Identify the time periods when authors should be present at their posters during each poster session. The authors will need to be informed of these times.
- o Identify an **AV chairperson** and a team of people, possibly students, to obtain and operate all necessary AV equipment during the conference.

Six weeks before the conference:
- All the abstracts for volunteer oral and poster papers should be received by the program committee for grammatical review and correction. A two person committee should then receive the corrected abstracts and develop the proceedings. Each abstract should be given an abstract number according to the session or topic area. This reference number will be used as the index number in the proceedings and the poster board location or oral session location. As the rental of poster boards can be significant authors should present their poster in the vertical format in order that 2 posters can appear on each side of the poster board. Authors will need to know in advance how to attach their posters to the boards, e.g.: Velcro or stick pins.

Four weeks before the conference:
- **The fundraising and promotions/advertising chair** should invite the agricultural press to attend the conference.
- **The program committee** will need to identify all the **session chairpersons** for inclusion in the final official program.
- **The program committee** is responsible for having the conference program, sponsors advertisements and abstracts of the conference proceedings printed 4 weeks before the conference. The full invited papers can be distributed via CD at a very low cost. It will be necessary to become familiar with the current Adobe program that is used to create a "Searchable Word document or index system" to complete the master CD prior to having it duplicated.

Two weeks before the conference:
- The **Local Arrangement Food Manager** will need to confirm the numbers of paid meals from the registration forms with the catering manager. The Food Manager should negotiate for extra meals due to late registrations (12- 24 hr prior to the event). A meal ticket should be required at each event. The Local Arrangement committee will need to supply ticket takers at each event. It will be necessary to negotiate with the catering company to charge on the number of actual meals tickets collected.

One week before the conference:
- **Fundraising and promotion/advertising committee** will need to arrange for the "List of Sponsors" signage.

The Day before the conference:
- The registration desks with all necessary registration information should be set up at the entrance to the conference centre. At least two people will be required to

operate the conference registration desk during the entire conference. This way they can spell each other off in slow times. People will arrive at any time throughout the conference. Prior to the start of the conference a notice should be posted stating when the registration desk will open.

- The people running the conference registration desk will become the information centre for all questions coming from the delegates. They will need to have information on the Poster Room location and set up times, meeting room locations and changes and general information on health services, banking services, restaurant inquiries coming from the delegates.

These suggestions for organizing and conducting a conference have been developed from many years of experience in co-ordinating provincial, national and international conferences.
I hope you find this of value.

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