

# ICMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE HOST COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

*Updated June, 2017*

ICMA conference host committees are asked to contribute their time and resources in a number of ways to make the conference an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all and to minimize direct costs to ICMA members and their families. In evaluating site proposals, the Executive Board looks first at a site's ability to conveniently accommodate ICMA's attendees and its multi-faceted program. Next, they look for the highest and best financial commitment from bidding convention and visitors bureaus. Finally, they review the commitments of the local volunteer host group. Especially important are any special allowances or discounts (e.g., reasonable hotel costs, reduced or free convention facilities) that the prospective hosts are able to negotiate.

Host committees are also asked to make a minimum financial commitment of \$100,000 to cover costs that may include registration bags (though they are often paid for entirely by ICMA-RC), setting up a booth at the prior year's conference (though the convention and visitors bureau will often cover much of the cost), attire for committee members and volunteers, a reception or dinner for the Conference Planning Committee, restaurant guides (though the host city will often cover that), and host committee administrative/meeting expenses.

Though it is not required by ICMA, most host committees are interested in raising funds beyond the minimum commitment to cover expenses such as subsidizing social event ticket prices, paying rental fees for expensive reception venues, serving refreshments at the host area in the convention center, subsidizing the cost of the convention center, purchasing items for the registration packets, throwing a volunteer reception, contributing to the keynote speaker budget, or engaging a retired member or fundraising professional to coordinate corporate outreach. Most recent host committees have spent a total of \$175,000 to \$300,000.

In the past, host cities have made financial contributions to the conference, and many host committees have raised money over a period of years from state and regional association members. The Executive Board allows host committees to seek subsidies for events from private sector sources if they wish. It is very important for host committee fundraisers to coordinate their efforts with ICMA Strategic Partner Program staff.

Conference host committees are involved in the following aspects of the conference:

## Social and Program Activities

- Major evening social events
- Opening session formalities
- Inspirational breakfast
- Field demonstrations
- Athletic events
- Tours
- Partners program
- Assistants' Exchange Program

## Business and Logistics Support

- Coordination with ICMA
- Promotional activities
- VIP transportation
- Welcome desks at hotels and airport
- Welcome packets

## Social and Program Activities

Major Evening Social Events. Approximately 1½ to 2 years before the conference, ICMA staff and the Host Committee’s sub-committee for social events will interview and hire a local “destination management company” (DMC), which will take the lead in arranging the conference’s major social events and tours. The Host Committee’s responsibilities are to offer suggestions for venues, consider subsidizing the costs of the events, and to work with staff and the DMC to make final decisions on what will be offered.

- *Saturday reception.* This early-evening ticketed event the day before the conference officially begins typically features light reception fare and attracts 400–700 attendees. Recent ticket prices have ranged from \$20 to \$40.
- *Sunday Welcoming Reception.* The Welcoming Reception usually takes place following the Opening Session on Sunday afternoon. This is a ticketed event, the price of which is included in the registration fee to encourage attendance by all 3,000–3,500 registrants. In recent years, the tradition has become to hold the event in the conference exhibit hall.

The Executive Board has established guidelines to be used when planning the Welcoming Reception. These guidelines respond to the preferences of ICMA’s general membership as reported through their conference Evaluation Committee and Planning Committee representatives for the past several years.

1. The Welcoming Reception should take place in the same facility as the Opening Session or within easy walking distance of the facility. If circumstances dictate busing, then the busing time should be brief.
  2. Welcoming Reception food should be moderate reception fare; feeding a large crowd a full meal should not be attempted because it is expensive and is rarely successful.
- *Tuesday evening events.* Typically, one to three optional, ticketed social events are offered on Tuesday evening to accommodate 900 – 1500 total participants. Venues have included concerts, museums, zoos, and cruises.

Opening Session. The Host Committee assists with three major aspects of the conference’s Opening Session on Sunday by arranging for: a local elected official, usually the mayor and/or county board chair, to offer a brief welcome; a color guard to present the flags; and a local religious leader to offer a non-denominational invocation. The committee also offers advice on appropriate performers for a short musical introduction at the beginning of the session. If the committee wishes to continue the tradition of presenting ICMA headquarters with a gift (usually a work of art), it is usually presented at the Opening Session.

Inspirational Breakfast. The Host Committee organizes the program for the Inspirational Breakfast, which is usually held on Monday morning and typically attracts 150–350 attendees. ICMA arranges for the meal and logistics, expenses for which are covered by the ticket price, and the Host Committee arranges for a speaker and music, moderate expenses for which are

budgeted by ICMA. The program usually consists of an invocation, musical entertainment, and an inspirational speech.

#### Field demonstrations

Field demos are a popular part of the conference's substantive program, attracting 50–150 attendees each. The Host Committee is asked to identify 5 to 7 potential field demo sites, which ICMA staff will visit and, together with the committee, narrow to 3 to 5 four demos on the basis of interest and cost. The local governments chosen for the demonstrations are responsible for preparing presentations, making logistical arrangements, and picking up any associated costs. ICMA arranges for transportation, the cost of which is recovered through a modest ticket fee.

#### Athletic events

Conference athletic events usually include golf and a 5K Fun Run/Walk. In recent years, some host committees also have organized tennis and bowling events as well as daily yoga. The Host Committee organizes and oversees the events, hires pros as needed, and arranges for refreshments, t-shirts and awards. Tickets are pre-sold by ICMA to cover fees, refreshments, transportation, trophies, and usually t-shirts. Some level of Host Committee subsidy may be required. Attendance varies from 25–150 per event.

#### Tours

Sightseeing and social tours, which attract 100–800 participants, are planned for all four days of the conference days (Sunday through Wednesday) and sometimes for Saturday, as well. Whether or not to offer pre- or post-conference tours depends on the location and timing. The Host Committee's responsibility is to propose ideas and work with staff and the local DMC to make final decisions on the tours that will be offered.

#### Partners Activities

Though many partners are interested and involved in the main conference program, ICMA provides separate partners programs on Monday and Tuesday. Since these programs are excellent opportunities to welcome partners and encourage group involvement, the Host Committee may wish to assist the Executive Board partners in greeting those who attend. Attendance is usually 300–400.

In recent years, partners have also been interested in volunteering to participate in a service project to benefit the local community. The Host Committee is asked to help identify a recipient organization for the service project and assist in any transportation that may be required. In addition to the partners' service project, the Host Committee may be interested in arranging a community service project that all conference attendees can participate in.

#### Assistants' Exchange Program

Taking place on the Friday before the conference, the Assistants' Exchange offers early career professionals an opportunity to spend a day visiting a local government in the vicinity of the conference site. The Host Committee organizes host communities, fields applications from interested participants (usually 10 to 15), matches host communities with participants, and arranges an informal gathering of program participants on Friday evening. Host Communities are asked to arrange transportation to/from the conference site and supply participants with lunch.

## **Conference Business and Logistics Support**

### Coordination with ICMA

One local staff person should be designated to coordinate logistical details and other loose ends for the Host Committee and to be the committee's main liaison to ICMA staff. In the past, this person has been an administrative assistant or assistant manager from the Host Committee chair's local government. This liaison role between the Host Committee and ICMA is a critical aspect of successful conferences.

### Promotional Activities

With the help of the local convention and visitors bureau, Host Committee members staff an exhibit hall booth at the prior year's conference. Approximately 10 months prior to the conference, the Host Committee hosts the on-site meeting of the Conference Planning Committee, whose members represent state associations and ICMA committees and task forces. The Host Committee chair is automatically a member of the Planning Committee and all Host Committee members are invited to participate in the Planning Committee's development of the conference educational program. For the preliminary program, the Host Committee chair prepares an invitation message.

### VIP Transportation

The Host Committee provides cars and drivers for airport pickup and delivery of international and other VIPs during the conference. Some committees have opted to hire a car service instead of arranging for committee members to use their own vehicles.

### Welcome Desks

During peak arrival times on Saturday and Sunday, Host Committee volunteers staff welcome desks at the airport and in the lobbies of conference hotels. The Host Committee also sets up a host desk near the registration area and schedules volunteers to staff the desk during registration hours, which span five days. Host desk volunteers answer attendees' questions about the city and the Host Committee's activities, especially field demonstrations and sports events. Host Committees usually purchase identifiable attire (e.g., polo shirts, denim shirts, vests) for volunteers to wear during the conference.

### Registration Bag

The Host Committee assists in selecting the design of the bag. The committee also contributes to the contents of the bag, including no-cost items from local companies, and a restaurant guide, which the committee assembles, produces, and pays for. The assistance of Host Committee volunteers in registration bag stuffing is appreciated.

## **Host Committee Timeline for Planning an ICMA Conference**

In general, a Host Committee begins to concentrate on fundraising and promotion in the early years, and may tentatively reserve sites for major events such as the Saturday and Sunday receptions and Tuesday evening options. Subcommittees should be created approximately two years out to brainstorm ideas and begin to carefully observe what works and does not work at prior-year conferences. The pace accelerates one year out with the first really intense period coming between the preceding conference and the following spring. By the end of February of the conference year, decisions must be made on all social activities and any other activities requiring a ticket, so that the preliminary program can be released in May/June. The next intense period is around the conference itself.

### ***Eight years prior to conference:***

- June: Site selected by ICMA Executive Board
- Host Committee selects chair
- Host sub-committee on fundraising is appointed and begins planning

### ***Annually from time of selection:***

- Future host committee reps meet at each ICMA conference to discuss issues with each other

### ***Two years prior to conference:***

- Additional sub-committees are appointed and begin work
  - field demos
  - major social events
  - inspirational breakfast
  - athletic events
  - volunteers (including main host desk, hotel/airport welcome desks, VIP transportation)
  - registration packets (including restaurant guide)
  - exhibit booth at prior year's conference
  - opening session (music suggestions, color guard, anthem, invocation, gift)
  - assistants exchange program

### ***Year prior to conference:***

- ICMA staff join Host social sub-committee to interview potential destination management companies (DMCs) capable of coordinating social evenings, and tours
  - Prospective social event venues reserved by selected DMC
- First full Host Committee meeting with ICMA conference staff

### ***Preceding Year's Conference:***

- Host committee members staff exhibit booth coordinated by their city's convention and visitors bureau at the preceding year's event
- One complimentary ticket will be issued to hosts for each sports event, field demo, and the Inspirational Breakfast to observe how they function at the prior-year conference
- At the closing session, Conference Host Committee chair introduces 5-minute promotional video supplied by CVB

***October of year preceding conference:***

- Hosts' social subcommittee have morning meeting with ICMA staff and DMC to decide on recommendations regarding Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday evening social events
- Lunch and afternoon meeting with full Host Committee, including subcommittee reports:
  - Social events: recommendations are discussed and ratified by the full committee; note that the Conference Planning Committee must approve them before they are considered to be firm
  - Finance: goals are discussed and set
  - Field demos: 5 to 7 prospective demos identified for ICMA staff to preview in January/February
  - Sports events: venues identified for golf/5K/tennis (others?)
  - Inspirational breakfast: speaker and music ideas suggested
  - Volunteers: needs and process reviewed
  - Registration bag: review options for the bag itself and the contents
  - Restaurant guide
  - Name Host Committee liaison to ICMA staff, if not already done

***November of year preceding conference (typically the weekend before Thanksgiving):***

- Host Committee meeting on Friday afternoon
- Conference Planning Committee meets Friday evening to Sunday noon
- Host Committee chair is a member of Planning Committee; all Host Committee members are invited to participate in the Planning Committee meeting
- Hosts make presentation on social program to Planning Committee on Saturday afternoon after city tour
- Host Committee traditionally entertains the Planning Committee on Saturday evening with a reception and/or dinner

***Year of conference:***

***January***

- ICMA field demo staff visit site to preview 5-7 field demos and help HC to narrow to 3-5
- Conference staff site visit to meet with DMCs to finalize details of social events tours, busing for preliminary program

***February***

- ICMA Board sets registration fee and acts on Planning Committee recommendations regarding institutional business

***March (early)***

- Deadline for preliminary program copy
  - HC invitation message
  - Field demo descriptions
  - Inspirational breakfast speakers and music
  - Sporting event (5K, tennis, golf) descriptions and prices

- Roster of Host Committee members
- List of Host Committee sponsors to date
- Host Committee guide to local attractions

*June (early)*

- Conference website goes live, including online registration and housing bureau
- Last visit of ICMA staff to site before conference to meet with DMCs and others to get information needed for final program
- Full Host Committee meeting
  - Reports from all subcommittees
  - Review Hosts' on-site responsibilities

*June (late)*

- Copy due for final program
  - Opening Session: details of color guard, invocator, mayor
  - Changes from preliminary program?

## Overview of Host Committee On-Site Schedule

*(Detailed orientation/instruction sheets will be sent to HC coordinator 2 weeks out)*

### Friday

- Ongoing VIP (mostly international) airport pickups
- use own cars; 2 HC reps. per pickup
  - details on flight arrivals and departures about 2 weeks out
- 9 am-3 pm Registration bag stuffing
- 3 pm Optional host orientation meeting and tour of convention facility (approx. 1 hour)
- volunteer staging room (keyed; ICMA supplies walkie to communicate with business office; HC supplies food if wanted)

### Saturday

- 7: 30 am HC volunteers may register ½ hour before registration opens
- 10 am-5 pm Welcome desks at each hotel and airport
- ICMA arranges for desks and has signs made
- 8 am-6 pm Main Host desk at convention center
- Ongoing Human directionals in convention center (should know city well)
- Evening Co-host evening reception  
HC chair and partner are invited to Leadership Dinner

### Sunday

- 7-8:30 am 5K: Host rep. coordinates (brings prizes & snacks; collects and delivers signed waivers to conference office; reports winner and times to conference office for newspaper)
- 8 am-3 pm Welcome desks at each hotel; airport  
Main Host desk in convention center
- 3-5 pm Opening Session
- Host Committee coordinates greetings by elected officials
  - Chair present gift to ICMA
- 5-7 pm Co-host Welcoming Reception



Monday

- 7-8:15 am      Inspirational Breakfast
- 8 am-5pm      Main host desk in convention center
- 10 am-Noon    Field demos: HC reps. help to load buses, give driver(s) directions (in advance, too), get demo off on time and accompany it
- 1-3 pm          More field demos

Tuesday

- 8 am-5 pm      Main host desk in convention center
- 12:30-4:30 pm Tennis tournament: HC rep. has everyone sign a waiver that ICMA supplies; trouble shoots event; supplies refreshments; reports winners to business office
- 1-3 pm          Field demos

Wednesday

- 7 am-2 pm      Golf tournament: HC reps. help load buses at each hotel; makes sure waiver signed; trouble shoots event; reports winners to business office. (Note: Sometimes this event is held on Sunday rather than Wednesday.)
- 8:30-10:30am Celebration of Service/Closing Session
- All HC members invited; chair must attend to receive plaque
- 9-Noon          Main Host committee desk
- 11 am-  
12:15 pm        “Pass the torch” meeting with next year’s HC
- Ongoing        VIP (mostly international) airport drop offs