State Societies of Association Executives
2018 Meetings, Education & Professional Development Survey Report

Introduction

A group of 12 state societies of association executives collaborated with Whorton Marketing & Research in Las Vegas, Nevada and Event Garde in Kalamazoo, Michigan to conduct a survey of their education, meetings, and professional development activities. The survey was conducted among 1,986 associations during the period of January 25 to February 16. A total of 609 individuals started a survey and 382 completed their survey, for an effective response rate of 19%.

Meetings Planned or Held in 2017

- **Meetings:** Participants report a mean of 54 and a median (midpoint) of 16 total meetings planned in 2017. These consisted primarily of digital meetings (mean of 20.2) and half-day face-to-face meetings (mean of 16.8), although the medians of 2 and 3 meant that some organizations sponsor many meetings in these formats, and most organizations sponsor few or none. One-day (mean of 9.2) and multi-day face-to-face meetings (mean of 4.1), and blended learning meetings with both digital and face-to-face components (mean of 3.4) are less common.
- Only 13% report holding any blended learning meetings, while multi-day (83%), one-day (68%) and half-day face-to-face (68%), and digital meetings (59%) are relatively common.
- **Total Attendees and Individuals Trained:** Participants reported a mean of 1,964 and a median 614 total attendees in 2017. Controlling for unique individuals by excluding multiple registrations, we find that organizations trained a mean of 1,234 and a median of 401 unique individuals.
- **Outsourced Meeting Planning Activities:** While one-third of respondents report not outsourcing any meeting planning activities, 54% outsourced audio/visual activities in 2017. No other service was outsourced by more than 12% with registration services, show sales, marketing, meeting management, and all planning functions outsourced by 4%-7% each. Site selection, expo/trade show management, and housing were outsourced by 10%-12% each.
- **Standalone Board or Committee Meetings:** Overall, respondents report a mean of 14 and a median of 6 standalone Board or Committee meetings in 2017. Room block size is a mean of 53 and median 10 per meeting, and attendance is a mean of 40 and median of 20.
- **Educational Seminars:** Respondents report a mean of 25 and a median of 5 educational seminars in 2017. Room block size is a mean of 159 and median of 6 per seminar, while attendance is a mean of 137 and median of 50. Many seminars appear to be local in nature and do not have many traveling for an overnight stay, although the larger events do result in a comparatively high mean.

Professional Speakers in 2017

- **Spending on Compensation for Professional Speakers:** Almost all respondents pay professional speakers, but by range, one-third pay less than $5,000. Many pay more, including $25,000 or more (22%) or between $15,000 up to $25,000 (15%). Another 30% pay between $5,000 to $15,000.
- **Professional Speakers Hired:** Most respondents (63%) hired professional speakers for any of their meetings held in 2017.
- **Typically Use Speakers Bureau:** Only 54% of those who hire professional speakers used a speakers bureau for recommending and hiring professional speakers.
- **Methods Organization Used to Identify Professional Speakers:** Respondents indicate that they generally use recommendations from members (80%) or use speakers they have seen or worked with before (77%). Less-common methods include using recommendations from professional networks (59%) or from staff (55%). Web searches (33%), speaker proposal processes or direct solicitations from speakers (23% each) are used less frequently. Recommendations from speaker bureaus (19%) and social media (14%) are used by a few organizations.
- **Led Process for Selecting Which Professional Speakers to Hire:** The chief staff executive is most commonly leader of the process used to select which professional speakers to hire; 52% of respondents indicate they are a leader. 39% indicate that senior education/professional development staff, 33% indicate a Board or volunteer committee, and

25% indicate that a committee chair leads the process. Fewer indicate that a staff committee (15%), the chief elected officer (7%), or a case-by-base basis (10%) leads.

- **What Organization Requested/Required of Professional Speakers:** The majority of respondents (61%) require only a presentation from their professional speakers. Another 27% requested more, and 12% required more than the presentation, such as a blog post, article, or promotional video.
- **What Organization Requested/Required of Professional Speakers:** Respondents indicate requesting/requiring an average of 2.2 other things of professional speakers if they did not indicate that they require only a presentation from them. The most common requests/requirements are participating in other elements of the primary meeting (40%), being interviewed for a publication (34%), writing a newsletter/magazine article (34%), recording a promotional video (31%), or participating in a pre-meeting educational experience (29%). Other requests/requirements include participating in a post-meeting educational experience (15%), writing a post for the organization or meeting blog (19%), or some other activity (18%).

Major Meeting in 2017

- **Major Meeting Registration, Revenue:** Respondents report a mean attendance of 971 and a median (midpoint) of 350. This was a mean of 38% and a median of 30% of total current membership attending the event. The event accounted for a mean of 21.5% and a median of 15% of the organization's annual revenue. A mean of 40.5 and a median of 10 individuals registered and did not attend, and a mean of 8.2 and a median of 5 staff attended.
- **Major Meeting Hotel, Logistics:** The major meeting held by organizations has a mean largest meeting room capacity of 1,542 and a median of 300. The peak number of hotel rooms is a mean of 287 and a median of 150. The largest meal function attendance is a mean of 455 and a median of 250. The average number of meals at the major meeting is a mean of 8.0.
- **Meeting Location Restrictions:** Most respondents face restrictions on where they can meet. Organizations that were national or international in scope were asked if they were prevented from holding their meeting outside the United States; 26% were allowed to and 74% were not. Organizations that were local, state, or regional in scope were asked if they were allowed to meet outside of their state; 30% were and 70% were not.
- **Facility Type Used/Will Be Used for Convention/Conference:** Respondents generally indicate that they use or will use a single hotel for their convention/conference (59%). Fewer indicate a convention/conference center (27%), while 6% use multiple hotels and 7% report another facility type (often a mix of hotels and a convention/conference center).
- **Number of Days and Days Held:** The major meeting is held for a mean and median of 2.9 days with a most typical Wednesday through Friday schedule. Thursday is the most common day the meeting is held, reported by 61%, followed by Friday (55%) and Wednesday (53%). Tuesday (36%), Saturday (33%), Monday (26%), and Sunday (23%).
- **Total Number of Sessions Offered:** The average number of total concurrent tracks was a mean of 4.1 and a median of 3.0. The average maximum concurrent sessions was a mean of 11.4 and a median of 4.0. The average number of plenary/general sessions was a mean of 26.7 and a median of 3.0 sessions.
- **Live Video Streaming of Content:** Very few organizations provide live video streaming of their major meeting's content—3% for all plenary/general sessions and 2% for all concurrent sessions, and another 4% each provide live video streaming for some.
- **Type of Facility for Convention/Conference:** Organizations report that a single hotel (59%) is the most common type of facility used for their conference or convention. A convention/conference center is used by 27%, while 6% use multiple hotels and 7% other facilities.
- **Identifying Industry Speakers:** Respondents indicated less of a reliance on member recommendations to identify industry speakers than they use for professional speakers. They generally use speakers they have seen or worked with before (65%), or who are recommended from volunteer communities (57%), membership (56%), Board members or staff (55% each). Far fewer use a speaker proposal process (34%), recommendations from industry partner organizations (32%), direct solicitations from industry practitioners (29%), and recommendations from suppliers (19%).
- **Number of Speakers:** A mean of ten and a median of one industry speaker, and a mean of two and median of one professional speaker was hired last year by responding organizations.

- **Standard Compensation Package Provided:** Most (70%) offered some compensation to their industry speakers. Complimentary lodging or reimbursement for lodging (52%) was most common, while complimentary registration for the full meeting, meals or reimbursement for meals, and transportation/reimbursement for transportation were indicated by 40%-41% each. Honoraria or stipends were given by 32%, a comped registration by 16%, and reduced registration (8%) or documented CE (10%) were rarely offered. The estimated value of the package is a mean of $1,658 and a median of $700.
- **Involved in Planning Meeting:** Generally the chief staff executive (78%) is most likely to be involved in planning the meeting. A senior education/professional development staff member(54%), volunteer committee (52%) or staff committee may be involved (40%). Board or a Board committee (28%), or chief elected officer (16%) is more rare.
- **Made Final Venue/Site Recommendation** The final venue/site recommendation is generally made by the staff (90%) and sometimes by the Board (31%) or a volunteer (19%). It may be obvious to point out, but with a total of 140% answering, more than one party makes the final decision in at about one-third of the participating organizations.
- **Characteristics of Major Meeting** The 2017 major meeting generally hosted exhibits (77%), but infrequently used a CVB for recommending the venue or site (27%) or offered a room block for the meeting (16%). A median of 95% and a mean of 79% of rooms were picked up in the block. The average total exhibits reported for events that held them was a mean of 73 and a median of 44.5.

Speaker Preparation for 2017 Major Meeting

- **Prepare Speakers:** Organizations generally did things to help their industry speakers (59%) and professional speakers (47%) prepare, while 31% did not help them prepare.
- **How Organization Prepared Speakers:** If they helped them prepare, most organizations used email to prepare their industry (91%) and professional speakers (85%). Many also used a conference call particularly to prepare them, more often the professional (79%) rather than industry speakers (62%). Individual coaching is offered less often, to 25% of industry and 23% of professional speakers, respectively, while 16% use an in-person meeting and 11% a dedicated web site or portal for industry speakers and fewer do so for professional speakers. Digital meetings are rare for both kinds of speakers.
- **Content Provided to Speakers:** Most often it is information about the expected attendees such as the number and their interests or skills (provided by 91% of the organizations to their professional speakers and by 86% to their industry speakers. Information regarding venue or session logistics (for 82% of professional and 78% of industry speakers), expectations about content and learner objectives (for 70% of industry and 68% of professional speakers), and information about overarching themes and content tracks (for 67% of professional and 63% of industry speakers) are also commonly offered. Far fewer share information about the speaker/session evaluation (for 38% of industry and 29% of professional speakers), and training trips for better presentations (for 22% of industry and 7% of professional speakers).
- **Months in Advance Communicated Expectations:** Generally expectations are communicated a mean of 5.4 and a median of 5.0 months prior to the event for industry speakers, and a mean of 6.4 and a median of 5.0 months prior for professional speakers.
- **Collaborate with Speakers to Tailor Presentation Submissions:** A slight majority of organizations collaborate with all of their industry speakers to tailor presentation submissions, while 45% do so with all professional speakers. Another 21% collaborate with half or more of their industry speakers, and 17% collaborate with fewer than half, while 11% do not collaborate with industry speakers. 23% each of organizations collaborate with half or more, or fewer than half of their professional speakers, while 9% do not collaborate with their professional speakers.

Evaluations

- **Evaluations Conducted:** Most (88%) of organizations gathered attendee feedback about the content and/or quality of their 2017 major meetings. Among those who do gather attendee feedback, 93% evaluate the overall meeting, 76% evaluate each session, and 70% evaluate each speaker.
- **How Evaluations from Attendees are Collected:** Evaluations are generally collected through completed online evaluations (reported by 76% of organizations), with 43% continuing to use paper-based evaluations, and 19% use mobile app-based evaluations. As these responses total 140%, many organizations today rely on more than one method to collect evaluation data. Most (88%) of organizations gathered attendee feedback about the content

and/or quality of their 2017 major meetings. Among those who do gather attendee feedback, 93% evaluate the overall meeting, 76% evaluate each session, and 70% evaluate each speaker.

- **Measured Whether Learning Occurred:** Only 18% of organizations measured whether learning occurred at the 2017 major meeting. Among those who did, 73% of them did so through evaluation questions that align with learning objectives. Far fewer did so through post-session (27%) or post-meeting assessments or follow-ups (22%), a combination of the two (13%), or evaluations conducted well after the meeting (11%).

Profile: Top Education Staffer

- **Title:** Organizations indicated that the title of the most senior member of their education/professional development function is either the chief staff officer (CEO, ED or President) (39%) or Director (36%). Few report that this position is a Senior Vice President or Vice President (10%), Manager (7%), or Coordinator (3%) and 5% list other titles.
- **Base Annual Salary** Based on the ranges used, this position has an interpolated median annual salary of $81,100 or a mean of $79,500. By range, 22% earn an annual salary of $105,000 or more; 13% earn $90,000 to $104,999; 23% earn $75,000 to $89,999; 16% earn $60,000 to $74,999; 16% earn $45,000 to $59,999; and 9% earn less than $45,000.
- **Education** A majority report that their most senior education staffer has a Bachelor's degree (56%) or a graduate/Master's degree (26%). Only 7% have a PhD or post-doctorate education, 5% some college, 4% an Associates, and 2% High school diploma.
- **Professional Designation** Only 40% hold some professional designation, with 20% reporting a CAE, 14% a CMP, and 12% reporting some other designation.
- **Gender** Most top education staffers in organizations are female (70%).
- **Age** The top education staffer is a mean of 50 years of age. By range, only 11% are under 35, while 22% are 35-44, 28% are 45-54, 30 are 55-64, and 10% are 65 or older.
- **Ethnicity** The most senior member of the education/professional development function is almost always White/Caucasian (94%), and rarely Latino/Hispanic (4%), Black/African descent (2%), or Asian (1%).

Profile: Organization

- **Scope of Membership** 63% have a statewide focus, actively soliciting membership within this area. Another 12% report smaller scopes, either regional/multiple-community or local/single community scope. Broader scopes were reported by 10% each who are national or international in scope, and 3% who were multi-state.
- **Type of Organization** The majority of respondents (55%) are trade associations, with organizational members. Another 30% are professional societies, with individual members. Other types of organizations include educational institutions, charitable or philanthropic, Convention and Visitor's Bureaus, or some other structure (often AMCs).
- **Primary IRS Tax Status** Most respondents are 501(c)6, reported by 62%. Another 29% are 501(c)3. Relatively few are 501(c)5 or 501 (c)4.
- **Total Membership** Overall, respondents report a mean of 4,291 members or a median of 750. By range, 25% report 250 or fewer members, 30% 251 to 1,000; 32% 1,001 to 7,500; and 12% more than 7,500.
- **Budget Range** The average budget is a mean of $2.3 million and a median of $1.03 million. By range, 12% have budgets smaller than $250,000; 42% have budgets between $250,000 up to $1 million, 34% have budgets of $1 up to $5 million, and 12% have budgets of $5 million or more.
- **Membership Share of Revenue** Membership as a share of overall revenue was a mean of 48.8% and a median of 45%. By range, one-third report that membership is at least 60% of revenue (10% report that it is all of their revenue). Only one-sixth report that membership is less than 20% of revenue while about one-fourth report that it is 20% up to 40% of revenue. The remaining one-fourth report that membership is 40% up to 60% of dues.
- **Share of Revenue from Conventions, Exhibits, Meetings, and Sponsorships** The general meetings category (including in-person or digital, and sponsorships with the primary purpose of educating industry practitioners) accounts for a mean of 29.7% and a median of 25.2% of total organizational revenue. By range, 24% report earning less than 10%, 29% earn between 10% and 29%, 22% earn between 40% and 49%, and 14% earn at least 60% of their revenue from this category.

- **Gross Meeting Revenue by Source** Meeting registrations (52%) account for the highest mean proportion of gross meeting revenue. Sponsorship (23%), exhibitions (19%), and other revenue (6%) round out the total. By range, one fourth of respondents each report that meeting registrations are 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 75% of total meeting revenue—almost a perfectly linear distribution. Most respondents report that exhibits (72%) and sponsorships (68%) account for 25% or less of category revenue. Only 7% and 13%, respectively, report that these two sources account for at least half of meetings-related revenue.
- **HR Capacity Spent on Education or Professional Development** Overall, respondents report that a mean of 31.9% and a median of 25.4% of their total human resources capacity is spent on education and professional development. While roughly one-fourth each report that 10% or less, or 11%-25% of their staffing resources are dedicated to this function, almost one-third report that 26%-50% of staffing are, and 17% report that more than half is dedicated to education and professional development.
- **Average Staff Overall and by Function** Respondents report a mean of 9.6 total full time staff, 0.7 part-time staff, 1.5 other contracted staff/consultants, and 0.4 paid or unpaid interns. Among those focused on education and PD, there are a mean of 2.1 full-time staff and 0.7 other personnel. Relatively few respondents report non-full-time staff: only 13% each report any part-time staff or other contracted staff/consultants, and 2% each report paid or unpaid interns.
- **Number of Full-time Staff** By range, only 18% of organizations report 0-1 full time staff. Another 28% report 2-3, 26% 4-9, 21% 10-25, and only 7% report more than 25 full-time staff. In terms of staff dedicated to education or professional development, 57% report 0-1, 29% 2-3, and 14% four or more staff.
- **Anticipated Changes in 2018** Overall, respondents are most likely to expect increases in meeting attendance (48%) and gross meeting revenue (46%), with fewer expecting increases in sponsorship (37%) and particularly exhibitions revenue (28%). A more common view of exhibitions is that revenue will likely remain the same (61%) and almost as many (50%) feel sponsorship revenue will likely remain the same. More than 40% also feel gross meeting revenue and meeting attendance will likely stay about the same. Between 11% and 14% believe all four of these metrics will decrease in 2018.