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Teachers of Psychiatry Meeting

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Organizing an International Conference

This presentation will review the purpose and objectives of international meetings. The presentation will then cover tendering for meetings, different meeting models, selection of the organizing committee and conference organizer, recruitment of sponsors and partners, speaker selection and scientific program planning, subsidies for speakers, programs for junior colleagues, competitions and prizes for contributions, budget planning, venue selection, setting registration fees, advertising, social program, and meeting documentation and publications.

Purpose and objectives of international meetings

- **Bring together professionals in a field from around the world**
- **Confirmation and affiliation of being in an international professional group**
- **Share knowledge, skills, experience and wisdom**
- **Subject ideas, research and practice to scrutiny from international peers**
- **Encourage, train and instruct junior colleagues – scholarships and competitions**
- **Collaboration opportunities for research, practice and policy**
- **Social interactions – initiate, establish, build and maintain professional relationships**
- **Develop organizational experience and infrastructure**
- **Promote host organization, profession, and country/nation**
- **Recruitment opportunities**
- **Visit new places, people and cultures**

Tendering for meetings

- **Know what is wanted**
- **Awareness of competitors**
- **Adjust promises to situation and demand**
- **Present date, location and venue, meeting duration, outline of program, budget, and conference organizer**

Meeting Models

Mega-meetings (5-7 days)

Midsized-meetings (3-4 days)

Short meetings (2 days)

Mini-meetings (1 day)

PRCP model

**3-day meeting – pre-meeting training
workshops, opening plenary session, closing
plenary session, parallel symposiums,
workshops, free papers, posters
Opening and closing ceremonies
AGMs and business meetings
Social program – welcome function, cocktail
party, and dinner
Tours and activities - individual vs communal
activities - depends on venue**

Selection of the organizing committee

- Main committee selected for contacts with delegate populations, government and industry influence – a ‘collaborative’ chair needed**
- Separate scientific program committee of academic and professional members – a ‘determined’ chair needed**

Selection of conference organizer

Track record, experience with similar meetings, knowledge of venue, financial strength (up-front payments in tens of thousands of dollars), ability to devote consistent staff to meeting, opportunities to build a longer-term relationship

Sponsors and partners

Needed for profile, connections to government and professional associations and organizations, delegates, and funding

Unconditional sponsorship preferred, but not often possible

Scientific program planning

- Depends on purpose**
- One theme vs comprehensive coverage**
- High interest topics**
- Balance national contributions**
- A balance of keynote presentations, symposium, workshops, young professional program (training, education, early research activities), free papers, posters, business meetings**

Speaker selection

- One or two 'Block-buster' plenary speakers**
- Subsidized international speakers cost about US\$10,000 each**
- Invited high profile respected symposium chairs that recruit speakers**
- All symposium proposals and speakers, free paper speakers and posters selected by scientific program committee – maintain quality**

Budget planning

Main expenses – venue hire (meeting rooms, lecture theatres), audio-visual, food and beverage, subsidized speakers (business class airfares, accommodation, ground transfers, registration waiver, social program), conference organizer fees, interpreter costs (plenary sessions only), advertising, printing, conference publications, website development and maintenance, organizing committee expenses

Main income – registration fees (depends on planned delegate numbers!), host organization donation or start-up funding, government and industry sponsorship

Concessions for developing country registration fees subsidized by other delegate registration fees

Advertising

- **Now web-based mainly**
- **Website crucial – need web manager and regular content updates**
- **Email contact mail outs – need extensive up to date email address lists**
- **Use sponsorship and competition opportunities to gather delegate information**
- **Recruit social media for contacts – LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter**
- **Advertise on ‘sister’ and related websites that match delegate profile**
- **Limited advertising in print media (journals, newsletters, postcards, brochures)**

Evaluation

Reports from delegates, speakers, sponsors and partners, host organization

Learn from experience – improve next meeting!

The Future?

Will real meetings be replaced by ‘virtual’ meetings (video-teleconferences) – unlikely, but will depend on costs

Thank you!