



State Conference Planning Manual

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to aid in the planning of the annual North Carolina Extension & Community Association State Conference, usually held in late October. State Conference is the annual meeting of NCECA, Inc. and is hosted by a district on a rotating basis. The host district should begin planning for the State Conference about 18 to 24 months in advance. The District is responsible for State Conference. The host District will absorb all expenses incurred. Likewise, any profit made will remain in the treasury of the host District.

The contents of this manual are designed to preserve and pass on conference history, to increase success and limit repeated problems or mistakes. However, this is a working document and is subject to review annually by the Leadership Team. At the conclusion of conference, committee members are encouraged to suggest changes that they believe would be helpful for future conference committees.

This is a procedural manual, not policy. The timelines and committee size suggestions contained in this manual serve as guidelines for conference planners.

The responsibility falls to the Leadership Team to ensure that the manual is updated at least in part, immediately after Conference each year. The host district committee should also make a recommendation to the Leadership Team if they feel a major revision of the manual is warranted.

Copies of the manual should be filed with the NCECA, Inc. Advisor when revisions/updates are made. The electronic versions available via the web should also be updated, and it is considered the authority.

The manual has been formatted so sections may be copied and given to committee chairs. This manual addresses the current conference duties and indicates who is responsible for these duties.

The State VP of the District shall serve as Chair, oversees all conference committees and is actively involved in many of these committees. The Chair will work closely with the Leadership Team and the Association Advisor in planning the educational program and the conference program schedule.

PURPOSE

The purpose of NCECA State Conference is to conduct the business of NCECA; provide program assistance to county and district leaders; and networking, educational and friendship opportunities for the general membership.

FORMAT, suggested

- **Day One:**
 - May have preconference workshops and/or tours
 - Opening lunch with speaker
 - Afternoon - Craft Workshops and Educational Seminars
 - Evening Event
 - **Day Two:**
 - Morning - Opening Session (may include breakfast)
 - Morning - Craft Workshops and Educational Seminars
 - Lunch with speaker/entertainment
 - Afternoon – NCECA Business Meeting
 - Banquet – Speaker, awards, entertainment, etc.
 - **Day Three:**
 - Morning - General Session/speaker (may include breakfast)
 - Craft Workshops and Educational Seminars
 - Closing Lunch with speaker/entertainment
- * District networking/friendship event as schedule permits

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- NCECA State Conference is self-supporting by registration fees. All money collected will be deposited in the host district and designated as NCECA Conference Funds.
- The host district is responsible for:
 - Lodging and/or meals for speakers and presenters.
 - Any gift to attendees
 - ALL expenses other than the printing of registration packets and programs.
- NCECA is responsible for printing the conference program, printing and distributing registration packets.
- If a silent auction is held, the host district retains all proceeds.
- NCECA Treasurer will pay the conference hotel bill with reimbursement from the district

CONFERENCE SITE SELECTION TIMELINE

TIME LINE

2-3 YEARS prior

- Review possible venues and select a conference location 2 years out.
- The current NCECA State VP of the host district with the Association Advisor negotiates and co-signs letters of intent with the selected site.

12-16 months prior

- The current NCECA State VP of the host district will appoint a District Conference Planning Committee from their respective County ECAs. County ECAs may choose to take responsibility for a committee. Chairs are directed to the State Conference Planning Manual.

CONFERENCE SITE SELECTION

The facility should be a hotel/motel, conference center or meeting facility that:

- Will seat approximately 250 banquet style and general session, ideally. If the rooms for concurrent sessions and general sessions will also be used for luncheon or dinner meetings, plan for time to convert the rooms.
- Will lodge approximately 250 people in the same facility (ideally) or another hotel/motel within close proximity. Average number of rooms per night is 40-60 rooms.
- Have breakout areas for workshops/seminars – minimum of four (4) – six (6).
- Rooms or areas may be needed for silent auction, cultural arts and a commercial trade show, preferably rooms that can be locked.
- Have an elevator if facility is more than one floor.
- Visible space near an entry for registration booth or desk.
- Storage space for Registration and Conference planning committee.

Space reservations with the hotel should be confirmed at regular intervals. The hotel will schedule other activities around the NCECA Conference if they think a particular space is not designated for use by the Conference. A final detailed room-by-room contract is put together just before the Conference. Confirm that all contract details are correct.

A checklist/rating sheet is used to evaluate the following site criteria:

- Facilities
- Rates for lodging, meals, public spaces
- Complimentary services and rooms/suites
- Additional costs, such as Internet access or AV resources
- Parking
- Rate guarantees
- Conference insurance requirements

ASSOCIATION ADVISOR

The Association Advisor is an NSCU employee whose responsibilities include serving as an advisor to NCECA. Conference responsibilities as outlined below are a portion of the role the Association Advisor fulfills for the NCECA.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES regarding State Conference

- Attend annual NCECA State Conference
- With NCECA State VP of host district, negotiate and sign facility contract.
- Make certain all involved understand their roles and responsibilities
- Attend District Planning Committee meetings
- Design conference registration packet and share with the Planning Committee for their information and review
- Work with Leadership Team to plan conference educational programming

STATE CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The NCECA, INC. Vice-president of District hosting shall appoint the Planning Committee for State Conference. It is recommended that a committee representative of the District be appointed. This committee should include the NCCES Association Advisor, Box 7605 NCSU, and Raleigh, NC 27695-7605.

The NCECA, Inc. President should be apprized of all plans and is responsible for the business meetings of the Leadership Team and the Leadership Council. The President will coordinate with the Leadership Team to prepare a packet for voting delegates. This packet should include official agendas, meeting minutes, proposed budgets, reports and any other documentation to come before the voting body.

The NCECA, Inc. Leadership Team is responsible for planning the educational and leadership training.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES of the Chair

- Make certain all involved parties understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Assign committee chairs and/or groups responsible for all aspects of the conference.
- Plan, schedule and chair meetings of the District Planning Committee.
- Attend all District Planning Committee meetings.
- Participate in preparation of conference budget.
- Submit a written status report to the committee and Leadership Team monthly.
- Receive and maintain conference registration information.
- Review and suggest updates the conference planning manual following the conference.
- Submit a final report and analysis of the conference to the Leadership Team within six (6) weeks following conference.
- With the help of the Association Advisor, facilitate communication among the committees, the hotel(s) and the counties.

SIZE OF THE COMMITTEE

This committee should be representative of the District. ECA members and Liaison Agents should represent each county. The Association Advisor should also be included.

MEETINGS

The committee should meet as often as necessary over the year before the Conference to do general planning, and discussion of work to be done by each committee.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES of the Committee

- Is responsible for the overall running of the Conference.
- Provide conference registration information to Association Advisor.
- Coordinate process of getting information to the State VP – Public Relations for pre-registration publicity.
- Set a Conference budget, including speaker's fees, registration rates, exhibit booth fee schedules (if applicable), all meals, etc.
 - Work with hotel caterer to plan all meals and breaks.
 - Work with REGISTRATION to provide enough tickets for each meal if necessary.
 - Supply Leadership Team with estimated attendance numbers for session room assignments.
 - Plan seating and decorations for each meal, if applicable. This includes reserved seating and head table assignments.
- Solicit door prizes.
- Work with Leadership Team to arrange for keynote speakers, and any other speakers
- Work with Leadership Team and Association Advisor to coordinate education program planning

- Discuss and verify presentation equipment needs with Association Advisor and hotel
- Perform other duties as outlined in the conference manual.
- Coordinate the work of the committees planning the Conference.
- Write thank you letters and/or create certificates of appreciation for all committee chairs and members, speakers, presenters and other volunteers.

TIME LINE

12 - 18 months prior

- Meet to discuss time lines, committee responsibilities.
- Select committee chairs.
- Encourage committee chairs to talk with past chairs for advice.
- Decide on how to communicate, how often to meet and how to coordinate the work of the committees.
- Set the theme for the Conference and announce at State Conference one year prior.
- Contact possible keynote and/or banquet speakers about costs and availability.
- If using vendors/exhibitors:
 - Gather information for solicitation letter: exhibitor fees, early and late booth reservation dates, what is included with the fee, etc.
 - Design the booth reservation form; set date for last possible addition of exhibitors.
 - Contact vendors regarding time, place, cost for upcoming conference exhibits; coordinate this.
 - Confirm status via e-mail with exhibitors as payment and booth requests arrive.
 - Contact decorating company to handle booth set up for exhibitors.
 - Work with PUBLICITY and web editor to decide how exhibitors will be promoted.

9 months prior

- Develop conference budget.
- Begin gathering information for registration packet
- Decide registration rates and deadlines.
- Obtain menus from the hotel caterer; begin planning meals and breaks
- Develop receipts, expense vouchers.
- Decide on conference gift.
- Sign contracts with keynote speakers.
- Report Conference registration fees, exhibit fees to Leadership Team.
- Determine how many sessions/workshops are possible in the hotel(s).

4-6 months prior

- Set all menus and costs and include them in the conference registration form.
- Set late registration date and finalize information for registration packet.
- Prepare procedure for late registration at Conference.
- Reserve meals for speakers and other guests.
- Plan preliminary program.
- Notify presenters and speakers of preliminary schedule.
- Get pictures and biographies or resumes of speakers and presenters.

2-4 months prior

- A final detailed room-by-room contract is put together just before the Conference. Confirm that all contract details are correct as soon as the hotel is able to provide this information.
- Confirm with all presenters and speakers and finalize equipment needs.
- Finalize program schedule and contact presenters with program times, handout procedures and/or expectations.
- Make sure Leadership Team is kept informed of program changes.
- Post finalized schedule on NCECA web site or facebook page

1 month prior

- Confirm all food arrangements with the hotel, including any reception, breaks, etc.
- Work with Association Advisor and Conference committees on all last minute details.
- Set due date for final committee reports.
- Confirm any special needs or special menus.
- Finalize reserved seating for Past Presidents and award recipients and reserved seats at the head tables.
- Ensure that Conference evaluations forms are prepared and evaluation process has been put in place.

Conference Month

- Give latest program numbers to Leadership Team and Association Advisor.
- Give preliminary meal numbers to the hotel. Give final number to hotel for each meal (up to 72-48 hrs. prior to meal).
- Finalize details with decorators and hotel.
- Work with REGISTRATION to plan workflow at the registration desk.
- Work with Cultural Arts & Silent Auction to decide how to check-in .

During Conference

- Provide registration numbers to Parliamentarian for their Credentials Report
- Make sure committee members are available to field questions and solve problems

After Conference

- Pay bills and close books.
- Send any refunds due.
- Send thank you letters to presenters, speakers, etc.
- Collect final reports from each committee to prepare final report for Leadership Team.
- Review and suggest updates to the conference planning manual.
- Use expense reimbursement form to submit bills and expense receipts in a timely manner.
- Summarize Conference evaluations and share with Planning Committee and next year's committee.
- Send certificate of appreciation to all committee members (or hand out at banquet).
- Write report for newsletters.

COMMITTEES

Counties historically take an area of responsibility and serve as the committee. However, a committee may be appointed from members in the district. Once appointed, committees should:

- Understand the purpose of their committee and the committee responsibilities.
- Understand the timelines for committee activities.
- Be aware of how their committee's function relates to other Conference functions and the success of the Conference overall.

Interested people who are not able to devote the time required to serve as a planning committee member, may be willing to serve as volunteers for smaller projects of short duration, or during Conference. (i.e. room hosts, help stuffing registration packets, staffing the registration desk, etc.)

Proofing Correspondence, Forms, the Program, etc.

The State VP of the District and the Association Advisor should proofread ALL publicity, correspondence and forms to be sent out. Check for correct information, spelling and grammar. The more proofreading is done by various people, the more mistakes are caught and corrected in advance, and the more problems are avoided.

REGISTRATION/STATE CONFERENCE INFORMATION

- See that all registration materials, name tags, tickets for meals and seminars, etc. are printed and placed in registration envelopes for distribution at annual NCECA State Conference.
- Provide workers for registration table all days of the meeting. Persons needed: at least 4-6 people per day. (Suggest district boxes with packets in alphabetical order.)
- The registration desk will also be the information center and center for lost and found. Nametags can be handled by this subcommittee or may be a separate subcommittee.
- See Section V of the manual for additional duties
- Work with the Host District Planning Committee.

VOTING DELEGATES' PACKETS/INFORMATION

- NCECA President & Parliamentarian are responsible for these packets.
- Secures proposed slate of officers from Nominating Chair.
- Prepares voting delegate packets with needed material for business meeting, including:
 - Voting delegate cards from Parliamentarian
 - Agenda for business meeting
 - Minutes from last State Conference business meeting
 - Proposed Budget and Treasurer's Report
 - Membership Report
 - Bylaws changes
 - Any item that requires a vote
- Delegates will be given the packets when they register at the state meeting or other time designated for credentialing.

BUSINESS SESSION/VOTING DELEGATE REGISTRATION

- NCECA Parliamentarian is responsible.
- Provides workers for the voting delegate registration table.
- Have voting delegates sign the county register and hand each one a voting delegate packet with business session materials. (Delegates must pick up their own packet.)
- Persons needed: at least 1 person at all times when the registration tables are open.

CULTURAL ARTS

- Facilitate check-in and set up of Cultural Arts display items. All County Cultural Arts Chairmen will assist.
- Assist judges with recording scores, attaching ribbons as needed.
- Set items for display after judging.
- Provide hostesses to watch over exhibits during viewing hours.
- Provide hostesses to assist with pick-up of display items at the close of exhibits.

DECORATIONS AND SET UP

- Determine and arrange for stage/head table decorations, including place cards.
- Provide table decorations, including head table, (favors optional) for all meals.
- Set up
 - **Meals** Prepare head table with place cards, microphone and podium (arrange with facilities). Oversee the Decorations and Favors Committee for this event. Seats will be designated for guests, award winners and past presidents. See that necessary gifts and awards are on hand.
 - **Business Meeting** Set up head table microphone and podium (arrange with facilities) Arrange a block of seating near the front for voting delegates. Arrange for two microphones on the floor for delegates.
- Work with the Host District Planning Committee, as they have final approval for decorations and favors relative to the conference theme.

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS/WORKSHOPS

The NCECA, Inc. Leadership Team and the Association Advisor are responsible for planning the educational and leadership training.

SILENT AUCTION/BASKET RAFFLE

Historically, each county has been asked to bring 1 or 2 items for auction. The proceeds help the District offset expenses. If a Silent Auction fundraiser is used, the committee

- Develops and provides bid sheets for silent auction items and oversees bidding.
- Provides individuals to collect and arrange items.
- Develops and provides contributors with a receipt for tax deduction purposes.
- Assists in collection of money and distributes the items to respective bidders.
- Asks host district treasurer to be present at collection of money.

If a raffle is used, the committee:

- Provides tickets for raffle baskets, collection bags for tickets, and worker to sell tickets if a basket raffle is used.
- Coordinates drawing and announcement of raffle basket winners.

EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE /TRADE SHOW

A commercial trade show is allowed. The host district may have a sales table of handcrafted items, cookbooks, or other fund raising items. Income is the property of the district.

- Send invitation/information to solicit exhibitors or displayers to county presidents.
- Provide tables for participants.
- Provide persons to check-in displays and hostesses to staff the showcase area.
- Coordinate with hotel to insure that space is used adequately and that the number of vendors is appropriate for the space available.
- Vendors – if applicable
 - Provide leaflet listing vendors and place cards for booths, if applicable
 - Send confirmation letters and set-up instructions to vendors.
- Have hostesses available to greet exhibitors and assist them with set-up.

HANDS ON ACTIVITIES

- Provide instructors and supplies for a variety of ‘make-it and take-it’ style hands-on activities as needed during the NCECA State Conference.
- Develop descriptions of the sessions for the NCECA Tar Heel Homemakers and eNews and on the NCECA website. Provide photos if possible.
- Set pricing to adequately cover costs but maintain affordability for each activity and provide for registration form.

HOSTESS/HOSPITALITY

- This committee will assist all other committees as needed. Although this committee has specific responsibilities, the State Conference is hosted by the District, thereby making each member a hostess.
- Stuff registration packets with any hospitality items and/or state meeting materials.
- Work with the registration committee to distribute packets as needed.
- Facilitate the collection and distribution of any favors and/or door prizes. All member counties should help.
- Ensure that speaker gifts are available at the appropriate session.
- Provide hostesses at each educational session/workshop to introduce speaker and assist with the needs of speaker/presenter.
- Hostesses monitor doors as speaker is presenting.
- Hostesses make sure the room is free from clutter and ready for the next session.
- Hostesses distribute and collect session evaluations.
- Provide hostesses to take tickets at door.
- Provide hostesses to meet and seat special guests (list to be provided by NCECA – VP of Host District).

PUBLICITY & PHOTOGRAPHY

- Develop and provide to Registration Committee, a press release and a photography release for use by attendees.
- Provide information to counties having daily or weekly newspapers. The State VP with Public Relations responsibilities can help with sample news releases.
- Provide a photographer to take pictures of county groups and all conference activities.

EVALUATIONS

- Develop and provide evaluations of overall conference to Registration Committee for inclusion in the packets.
- Develop and provide educational session/workshop evaluations.
- Collect and tabulate evaluations after the meeting and provide results to Planning Committee.

GIFTS

Obtain gifts from each county in the district. Each gift should have a specified value and be appropriate for either male or female. These will be used for speaker gifts and door prizes. The host district is responsible for providing thank you gifts to presenters, speakers and others as deemed necessary.

REGISTRATION POLICIES

- Participants may register for full conference or for one day, usually the day of the Business Meeting.
- Meals may be purchased for guests of participants.
- Keynote and banquet speakers should be given complimentary registration packets.
- Program Selection - The Planning Committee and the Association Advisor may determine if they wish to request that registrants indicate their workshop interest on the registration form. This has been used in the past to plan the size of meeting rooms, etc. for programs.

PRE-REGISTRATION AND THE REGISTRATION FORM

- The registration information will be provided to the Association Advisor for formatting. The registration packet will be emailed to all Liaison Agents and Leadership Team. It will be mailed to all members and will be posted on the NCECA web site.
- The packet should include:
 - Preliminary program
 - Registration form.
 - Education Program Interest form
 - Hotel room reservation information
 - Information on the speakers

- Registration Form should include:
 - Registrant's Name.
 - Registrant's Address.
 - Phone number of registrant.
 - Registrant's e-mail address.
 - Registrant's district and county.
 - Registrant's position in ECA.
 - Fees for Conference, including meals.
 - Directions for returning the form - to whom/where to send the registration materials.

For REGISTRATION

- Estimate of total attendance to plan numbers for registration packets.
- List of registrants by name to print nametags and match to meal tickets and receipts.
- Names of presenters who are not registered to create nametags.

FINAL REPORT

- How many people registered by each date: early, late, and on-site.
- Where were the costs the highest?
- What about the layout of the registration desk worked and didn't work.
- What could be done in the future to improve workflow during conference?
- What aspects of registration worked spectacularly?
- What problems could be avoided by future planning groups?
- Include copies of the registration and program selection forms.