

## **PRSA Travel and Tourism Section Annual Conference Bid Information 2021 Conference RFP**

Thank you for inquiring about serving as the host destination for the **2021** annual gathering of the Public Relations Society of America's Travel and Tourism Section, the premier source of professional development for public relations professionals in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The Travel and Tourism Section provides an event that meets the professional, education and media relationship building goals of our 600+ members, and boasts an impressive roster of recurring sponsors including TravMedia, Cision and Guinness World Records. The PRSA Travel and Tourism Section, endeavors to rotate this conference every other year between major media market destinations and other large/mid-size destinations. (NOTE: Major media markets are designated as those with at least 100 working travel journalists within a 150-mile radius).

This event brings top-tier travel media into the host destination **and generates over \$450,000** in visitor spending/economic impact on participating communities over the course of four days during the conference.

- **Recent media attendance** includes National Geographic Traveler, Food & Wine, USA Today, CNN Travel, Travel Channel, Lonely Planet, Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, Thrillist, Robb Report, House & Home, Readers Digest, Modern Living, The New York Times, Travel + Leisure, TripAdvisor.com, AARP, Time Out, Google Travel, The Weather Channel, Associate Press, AAA Westways, Saveur, Bon Appetit, Self, Southern Living, Western Living, Coastal Living, Midwest Living, Curve, Outside, Bridal Guide, Organic Spa, Casa Naranja, Huffington Post, Siempre Mujer, Food Network Magazine, American Way, Out Magazine, Family Circle, Convene, Meetings + Events and Smart Meetings.
- **Past speakers** include key influential figures such as **George W. Stone**, National Geographic Traveler editor-in-chief; **Samantha Brown**, travel expert/TV host; **Dan Harris**, ABC news anchor; **Rajan Datar**, BBC's The Travel Show host; **Amy Virshup**, New York Times travel editor; **Julie Cosgrove**, AFAR editor-in-chief; **Maricl Clark**, Travel Channel & HGTV editorial and programming VP; **Christine Quinlan**, Food & Wine deputy editor; **Bruce Wallin**, Robb Report editorial director; **Brekke Fletcher**, CNN Travel executive editor; **Aviva Patz**, ReadersDigest.com senior digital editor; **Stephanie Davis Smith**, Modern Luxury editorial director; **Andrew Nelson**, National Geographic Traveler editor-at-large; **Catherine M. Hamm**, Los Angeles Times travel editor; **Karen Palmer**, Tasting Table editorial director; **Jay Heinrichs**, Southwest Airlines: The Magazine editorial director; **Jeff Corwin**, Animal Planet host and leading conservationist; and **Peter Greenberg**, CBS News travel editor.

## What past host cities had to say about the PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference:

### 2018 Host City, New Orleans, LA

“Hosting the PRSA 2018 Travel and Tourism conference was overall a great experience. The planning board really embraced the destination and worked with us to incorporate unique New Orleans experiences and our Tricentennial messaging throughout the event. The media portion was a huge win and allowed us to proactively meet with and host 30 top-tier travel journalists, many of whom we had been trying to host for some time. On a personal note, it was rewarding to host our PR counterparts from around the country and showcase the best of New Orleans.”

- Vicki Bristol, Senior Communications & Marketing Manager, New Orleans & Company

### 2017 Host City, Palm Springs, CA

“Hosting the 2017 PRSA Travel and Tourism Conference was a rewarding experience. From the onset, the board focused on developing a conference that was impactful, not only for the attendees, but the destination. The conference brought more than 350 PR professionals focused on tourism and showcased Greater Palm Springs to an amazing group of media. The opportunity to develop relationships with PR counterparts and media is priceless. I highly recommend hosting the conference.”

- Joyce Kiehl, Director of Communications, Greater Palm Springs CVB

### 2016 Host City, Houston, TX

“Hosting the PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference proved an incredible opportunity to showcase Houston as a destination, not only to our colleagues from across the country, but also to high-profile media. We were able to work hand-in-hand with the executive committee of PRSA T&T to bring in key journalists we wanted to experience our city ahead of some major events. The organization proved a valuable partner in our media relations efforts in 2016, helping us secure some fantastic coverage.”

- A.J. Mistretta, Senior Public Relations Manager, Visit Houston

### 2015 Host City, Lexington, KY

“Hosting the PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference in 2015 was truly a wonderful experience. Having the conference here allowed VisitLEX to showcase Lexington to countless media and industry professionals who may not have otherwise visited our area. As a result, we received several amazing placements as a result of hosting media who spoke at the conference and having them extend their stay in Lexington. Although a big job to host a conference of this caliber, the PRSA board were great partners along the way. If hosting the PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference is something you’re considering, I would certainly recommend jumping into the bid process!”

- Niki Heichelbech-Goldey, Director of Communications, Visit Lexington

The PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference is planned and organized by a team consisting of on-staff PRSA representatives, industry-leading professional volunteers, and the host destination CVB. The team consists of:

- *Section Chair* (PRSA Travel & Tourism Lead Professional Volunteer Representative)
- *Section Executive Committee* (PRSA Travel & Tourism Professional Volunteer Board)
- *Host Chair* (Host Destination CVB's PR or Communications Representative)
- *Host Committee* (Host Destination CVB)
- *PRSA Staff* (On-Staff PRSA Organization Representatives)

All groups must work together collaboratively. To assist the *Host Committee* throughout the process of conference planning, the *PRSA Staff* will provide a "Roles and Responsibilities" document that outlines what is expected of all parties involved. For example, *Host Chair* participate on monthly calls during the 2020 conference planning cycle to maximize destination integration, media opportunities and offer an acute understanding of the scope of the event.

#### **REQUIREMENTS/HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR BID**

1. Preference will be given to bids from convention and visitors bureaus. Host destinations must send a delegate to PRSA Travel & Tourism conference prior to their host year to get a sense of the flow, destination showcase opportunities and PR value of the event.
  2. Your location must be served by a major airport.
  3. You must provide information about a proposed location, dates and hotel rates. Proposing hotels must send proposals to and contract through HelmsBriscoe, PRSA's preferred vendor. Hotel rates must be commissionable to HelmsBriscoe.
  4. Your bid must include hosting up to three PRSA representatives (*Section Chair*, an at-large *Section Executive Committee* member and a *PRSA Staff* member) for a site visit in 2019.
    - o NOTE: Site visits will only be conducted at destinations selected as the top two choices.
  5. Your bid must include hosting the 13-15 members of the PRSA Travel & Tourism *Section Executive Committee* for a conference planning retreat in August/September of the year prior to the conference for which you are bidding (*Example: 2021 Conference Bid includes hosting August/September 2020 Executive Committee Conference Planning Retreat.*). Destinations putting in a bid for the 2021 conference must adhere to the following criteria for the conference planning retreat (this does not need to be included in bid, but is agreed upon for planning and scheduling purposes):
    1. Propose a minimum of three date options (Wednesday to Saturday pattern) through August and/or September of 2020 for PRSA Travel & Tourism *Section Executive Committee* to visit destination for conference planning retreat.
    2. Finalize scheduling of conference planning retreat no later than February 15, 2020.
- Hosting this planning retreat includes:
3. Negotiating a deeply discounted room rate for *Section Executive Committee* members at the conference's host hotel or other nearby facility.

4. Securing a meeting room for the planning session.
5. Hosting a dinner or lunch for the *Section Executive Committee* and *PRSA Staff* during the conference. (Approx. 18 People)
6. Optional: Host an event for the *Section Executive Committee* members and *Host Committee* members to meet each other.
6. Your bid must include sponsoring the final keynote meal at the annual conference the year prior to hosting in order to announce your destination to attendees. Keynote meal sponsorships are \$7,500 and include all premier sponsor benefits.
7. Any destination that has hosted or is hosting a national travel/tourism industry event within 12 months of our proposed conference WILL NOT be considered for the years applicable in this RFP. This includes International POW WOW, SATW annual conventions, the DMAI International Conference, the PRSA International Conference, ESTO, etc.

**DEADLINE: FRIDAY, November 8, 2019**

### **BACKGROUND ON CONFERENCE**

This meeting is the single best source of professional development opportunities for public relations professionals in the fields of tourism and hospitality. In addition to learning about current trends and practices, participants have the opportunity to network with their colleagues and gain exposure to travel-related media via panel discussions, special tours and social functions.

Attendees come from throughout the United States and Canada—and some foreign countries—and represent an array of tourism-related businesses and organizations, including state and national tourism offices, convention and visitors bureaus, hotels, resorts, airlines, cruise lines, rental car companies, attractions, museums, historic sites, theme parks, tour operators and public relations agencies that represent such clients.

The annual meeting is open to both PRSA members and non-members, with a staggered fee structure that provides discounts for members and early registrants.

**PRSA funds the travel, accommodations and registration for approximately 25-35 top tier travel writers, editors and freelancers to attend the annual conference, offering an incredible opportunity for the host destination to gain exposure and work with the media on upcoming articles and placements promoting tourism to the area.**

The conference draws 450 participants, depending on its location, media invitees and professional development seminar topics.

The meeting is usually held in the late spring or early summer (May – June) with a suggested Sunday through Wednesday or Wednesday through Saturday format. (See below for dates to avoid and note that we're open to suggestions about your destination's ideal dates for the conference.) Ideally, the location rotates so that the conference becomes equally accessible

to participants from all over the U.S. and its surrounding countries, as shown in the following grid of past conference sites.

YEAR	LOCATION
2020	Spokane, WA
2019	Philadelphia, PA
2018	New Orleans, LA
2017	Palm Springs, CA
2016	Houston, TX
2015	Lexington, KY
2014	Tampa, FL
2013	Memphis, TN
2012	Columbus, OH
2011	San Antonio, TX
2010	Aspen, CO
2009	Kansas City, MO
2008	Pittsburgh, PA
2007	Los Angeles, CA
2006	Washington, DC
2005	Denver, CO
2004	Oakland, CA
2003	Fort Lauderdale, FL
2002	Albuquerque, NM
2001	New York, NY
2000	Honolulu, HI
1999	Orlando, FL

To aid in your planning, we are providing reports on contracted hotel room night blocks for the last four conferences. Please note that in some cases, two attendees shared one room. In other cases, several attendees came from the local area and therefore didn't need hotel rooms.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROOMS</u>
<b>Philadelphia</b> 2019 <i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Saturday June 15	78
	Sunday June 16	246 (conference officially began)
	Monday June 17	251
	Tuesday June 18	261
	Wednesday June 19	43

*Room Block and Hotel were sold out for event and additional attendees moved to non-contracted overflow properties*

<b>New Orleans</b> 2018 <i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Saturday June 2	77
	Sunday June 3	229 (conference officially began)
	Monday June 4	257
	Tuesday June 5	252

	Wednesday June 6	43
<i>Room Block and Hotel were sold out for event and additional attendees moved to non-contracted overflow properties</i>		
<b>Palm Springs 2017</b>	Saturday May 20	79
<i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Sunday May 21	248 (conference officially began)
	Monday May 22	254
	Tuesday May 23	265
	Wednesday May 24	43
<i>Room Block and Hotel were sold out for event and additional attendees moved to non-contracted overflow properties</i>		
<b>Houston, TX 2016</b>	Saturday May 21	43
<i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Sunday May 22	188 (conference officially began)
	Monday May 23	218
	Tuesday May 24	209
	Wednesday May 25	21
<i>Room Block and Hotel were sold out for event and additional attendees moved to non-contracted overflow properties</i>		
<b>Lexington, KY 2015</b>	Saturday June 13	45
<i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Sunday June 14	202 (conference officially began)
	Monday June 15	227
	Tuesday June 16	220
	Wednesday June 17	20
<b>Tampa, FL 2014</b>	Saturday June 7	45
<i>80% contracted attrition rate</i>	Sunday June 8	193 (conference officially began)
	Monday June 9	209
	Tuesday June 10	204
	Wednesday June 11	38
<i>Room Block and Hotel were sold out for event and additional attendees moved to non-contracted overflow properties</i>		

**CONFERENCE STRUCTURE**

- The conference format is usually a Sunday through Wednesday or Wednesday through Saturday format (3 full days), not including any pre-conference activities.
- PRSA has successfully added pre-conference programming the last four years and would anticipate doing so again in 2021. This includes three locations with space to hold a 20-person conference style meeting session.
- Members of the PRSA Travel and Tourism Section Executive Committee arrive a day early for meetings.
- The *Host Committee* is encouraged to organize pre- and/or post-tours for conference attendees and the media to allow them to experience the destination.
- The host hotel should offer the conference rate for up to two nights prior and two nights after the conference.

- Each day's activities include a mixture of professional development sessions and media panels. The *Host Committee* and the *Section Executive Committee* work collaboratively to determine the professional development topics, the overall theme of the conference, and to identify and secure panelists for these topic sessions, as well as keynote speakers. The *Section Executive Committee* retains final approval for all topics, speakers, etc.
- The *Host Committee* has flexibility in planning each day's itinerary and is encouraged to be creative with the schedule. This must be done in collaboration with *PRSA staff* and the *Section Executive Committee*. *PRSA* will assist you in structuring the conference agenda and can provide programs from past conferences to reference.

**What follows is a loose outline you may wish to follow as you plan your bid. PLEASE NOTE, the actual conference structure is subject to change based on evaluations received from prior year conference attendees. The PRSA Travel & Tourism *Section Executive Committee's* primary goal is to best meet the needs of our members and conference attendees:**

#### **Arrival DAY**

- Registration all day.
- PRSA Travel and Tourism *Section Executive Committee* arrives and meets that afternoon/evening.
- Pre-tours/activities for attendees to allow them to experience different aspects of the host city or destination and meet other conference attendees.
- Pre-Conference Professional Development Seminar (Max 50 ppl)
- Opening Evening Reception
  - NOTE: Previous events have included heavy hors d'oeuvres and an open bar; some events have featured entertainment.

#### **DAY 1**

- Registration all day.
- Welcome Keynote (mid-morning) General Session
- Organizations for PR professionals representing state public relations offices, PR agencies, transportation, attractions, accommodations, and convention and visitors bureaus gather at roundtable discussions for each group that morning.
- Breakout Sessions
- Group Lunch Keynote (speaker or big-name media panel)
- Breakout Sessions and or one additional General Session
- Free night. Participants are responsible for their own dinners. We encourage you to organize dine-around activities—by providing suggestions of or possibly discounts at local restaurants. *PRSA Staff* can assist with this process.

#### **DAY 2**

- Breakfast General Session
- Breakout Sessions

- Group Lunch. This typically features a keynote speaker who can address current trends or hot topics in the field of travel-related public relations.
- Four to five professional development sessions/media panels (typically three to four consecutive).
- Evening Media Mixer–suggested off-site venue that highlights destination
  - Media Mixer format is dependent upon the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section *Executive Committee's* decision based on a number of factors, including number of travel media within a 150-mile radius and past Media Event evaluations.

### **DAY 3/Departure Day**

- Morning professional development opportunities
- Group Breakfast/Brunch – roundtable discussion or professional development session.
- General Session - keynote speaker or big-name media panel
- Conference Ends early afternoon in time for attendees to catch flights home

### **HOST LOCATION BENEFITS**

- Your destination receives meeting revenue from rooms, food and beverage, etc.
- Your destination is featured in all the collateral and marketing material that is distributed for the conference.
- Your destination will likely receive media coverage from the media members who participate in the conference and any special pre- or post-conference tours. This requires some proactive work on part of either the host CVB or the *Host Committee*.
- Your destination is given the opportunity to request specific types of media (i.e. outdoor travel, broadcast/television personalities, lifestyle/wellness writers, etc.), helping to craft the media attendees through the panel topics and education programming.
- Because you share responsibility for filling the media panels with the *Section Executive Committee*, you can access media that you otherwise might not be able to bring to your destination. The *Section Executive Committee* is comprised of top travel PR professionals from across the country and the planning process gives your destination access to their connections. This strengthens your relationship with the media, as your interaction with them goes beyond a standard pitch. You could also use this opportunity to craft a special press tour for these members of the media.
- Your destination is exposed to communications professionals with a predisposition toward travel. Social media is integral part of the culture of this organization and its attendees.
- The conference provides a quality education program for professionals in the fields of public relations, marketing and travel. You can encourage professionals from your area to attend the conference and enhance their own skills. We offer a day rate for registrants who want to attend just one part of the conference.



## **HOST LOCATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

***NOTE: All contracts, final arrangements and guarantees with any hotels or outside vendors must be negotiated and signed by PRSA staff.***

1. The top two destinations chosen from all bids must host up to two members of the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee and a member of PRSA Staff (3 people total) for a site visit of your location. We ask that you make arrangements for these PRSA representatives at a prospective conference hotel site (do not have to be at the same hotel).
  - This hosting commitment includes air travel, airport transfers, hotel for at least one night, and meals for each person.
2. Create a local *Host Committee* that helps to develop the conference–acquiring media and other appropriate professionals to serve as speakers/on panels, obtaining sponsorships, organizing pre- and/or post- conference tours, developing the conference schedule/agenda, etc.
  - **NOTE: The Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee and PRSA Staff will assist with speaker procurement and must grant final approval on all speakers, sponsors, program, etc.**
3. Appoint one person—who must be a PRSA member—to serve as the *Host Chair*, who will also serve as an ex-officio member of the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee. This will require participation in monthly conference calls and attendance (or conference call participation) at the Board planning retreat in Sept/Oct (year prior to conference).
4. Help secure speakers for the media panel portions of the program, with input from and in collaboration with the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee.
5. Help secure speakers for the professional development sessions, with input from and in collaboration with the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee. Topics can relate to a theme or trend represented by your destination.
6. Identify complimentary/discounted transportation and lodging for speakers (final arrangements will be made by PRSA Staff).
  - NOTE: We are able to keep our conference fees low from year-to-year because the *Host Committee* uses their connections to obtain discounts.
  - Identify discounted or complimentary lodging for non-speaker media attendees (if some type of media event is held).
7. Help to identify a hotel that provides the best available lodging, meeting and entertainment venues for a reasonable price. The host hotel and/or the host city should provide some complimentary rooms for select members of the media and discounted or complimentary lodging for non-speaker media attendees (if some type of media event is held). Proposing hotels must send their proposals to and contract through HelmsBriscoe, PRSA’s preferred vendor. Hotel rates must be commissionable to HelmsBriscoe.

8. Help to identify meeting space either in the hotel or meeting venue nearby. Meeting rooms must be able to accommodate a general session up to 450 (banquet style) and up to three to five, simultaneous breakouts from 25-100(theatre style). The minimum requirement for the overall conference facility is 25,000 square-feet of meeting space that includes breakout possibilities. Hotel and/or meeting venue must send their proposals to and contract through HelmsBriscoe, PRSA's preferred vendor.
9. Sponsor a luncheon at the prior year's conference (2020), based upon sponsorship amount set by *Section Executive Committee*, as a kick-off to the next year's event in your city. (Approximately \$7,500)
10. Secure a **MINIMUM** of \$15,000 in local sponsorships. PRSA will provide you with sponsorship levels and benefits. Sponsorships can be of cash value or in-kind donations, if appropriate. ***All sponsorships must be finalized and approved by PRSA Headquarters.***
  - o ***NOTE:*** *Once the cash conference sponsorship budget has been met, and if registration goals are met, the Host Committee/Host City can utilize any additional sponsor dollars to secure high-level keynote speakers or for other uses, with approval by the PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Executive Committee and PRSA Staff.*
11. Help to identify an airline partner who can offer discounts for conference participants and/or comp tickets for members of the media.
12. Work with *PRSA Headquarters* to promote the meeting via broadcast e-mails, postcards, a printed conference brochure/media invitation and a conference program.
13. Sponsor a *Section Executive Committee* and *Host Committee* dinner during the conference.
14. Provide speakers' gifts, if applicable.

#### **PRSA TRAVEL & TOURISM SECTION VOLUNTEER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Incoming *Section Chair* and an at-large *Section Executive Committee* member will conduct a site visit of the conference location with a member of the *PRSA Staff*.
2. Work collaboratively with the *Host Committee* in developing the theme for the conference.
3. Develop the conference schedule.
4. Review all promotional and printed materials.
5. Work with the *Host Committee* regarding the topics for the professional development sessions and media panels. Give final approval on all sessions.
6. Work with the *Host Committee* to identify and secure speakers for the professional development sessions, media panels and keynote addresses.

7. *Section Executive Committee* members serve as moderators for media panels and professional development sessions.
8. The *Section Executive Committee* will determine the direction of the special Media Event in the programming for the conference. The *Section Executive Committee* determines where a Media Event will be held, and they will work with the *Host Committee* to develop a format for the event. The *Section Executive Committee* has final approval of the structure of this event.

### **PRSA CORPORATE STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Conduct a site visit of the conference location with the Incoming *Section Chair* and an at-large *Section Executive Committee* member.
2. Work collaboratively with the *Host Committee* and *Section Executive Committee* to develop the theme for the conference.
3. Approve the conference schedule that is developed.
4. Organize the logistics of the professional development sessions, including speaker registration and audio-visual needs.
5. Draft and sign contracts with the host hotel, meeting site and all outside vendors.
6. Act as the main liaison with the hotel, audio-visual companies, food and beverage managers, etc.
7. Check facilities, collect invoices and cut checks at the conference.
8. Develop budget, provide budget support and work with the *Host Chair* on budgets.
9. Provide assistance in arranging transportation and lodging for all speakers, working with the local *Host Committee* to secure the most reasonably priced hotels and airfare.
10. Secure national sponsors in conjunction with volunteer board to assist in underwriting costs.
11. Design and send the conference brochure/invitation with input from the host city that promotes the destination. Final approval from the PRSA marketing team.
12. Review all promotional and printed materials.
13. Create and publish the conference program and/or app and distribute on-site.
14. Provide all registration services, including operating the registration table on-site.
15. Provide a biographical sketch of all professional development, keynote and media speakers with the materials at on-site registration.
16. Execute on-site conference logistics.

### **Helpful Hints for an Outstanding Proposal**

- Ensure your cover letter clearly articulates familiarity with the conference (note past attendance if applicable)

- Share current, relative media-worthy reasons your destination is ready to host top-tier travel media. If you are bidding as a major metropolitan area, clearly articulate which neighborhoods you are suggesting (and what their stories are).
- Give a hint about the local media scene; who might be great to attend our media mixer or a potential speaker?
- If you have established local partners (inside or outside of hospitality), brag about them. For example, Lexington brought a local whiskey distillery into the mix.

**FOR 2021 BID PROPOSALS:**

***DATES TO AVOID***

- April 24-28, 2021 (IPW in Chicago)
- May 2-8, 2021 (National Tourism Week)
- May 9, 2021 (Mother's Day)
- May 27-31, 2021 (Memorial Day)
- June 20, 2021 (Father's Day)
- July 4, 2021 (Fourth of July)
- TBD
- Avoid conflicts with SATW regional/national conferences

NOTE: These guidelines can be modified if a destination has special relationships with sponsors or the media or can bring other "special resources" to the table.

**For further information or to submit a bid, please contact:**

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