

PRSSA



2023–2024

District Conference Execution Guide

An end-to-end resource guide for hosting Chapters

WELCOME



Congratulations! Your Chapter has been selected to host a 2024 District Conference! Thank you for all your commitment and hard work. Hosting a District Conference is an experience like no other, and I can't wait to see your event come to life. I have no doubt that you will host an incredible conference, creating an unforgettable experience for the members of our Society.

In this Execution Guide, you will find the resources needed to successfully plan, execute and manage your upcoming District Conference.

Important Information:

- Tasks, committee structure and role descriptions listed in this handbook are suggestions. Remember you should add or alter tasks and roles based on your specific conference activities.
- Look out for an email from me soon with further information. We'll be discussing the following steps and establishing a reporting schedule and communications timeline to help your Chapter stay on track in the planning process.

Hosting a District Conference can seem overwhelming at times, but you are not in this alone. I am here to help you! Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, want to brainstorm ideas together or are looking for guidance of any kind. Also, I highly encourage you to contact other District Conference hosts. We're one big team, and we can all learn and grow together.

Hosting a conference will benefit you, your Chapter and the Society in so many ways. I am very excited to watch you take on this amazing journey.

Here's to a wonderful season of District Conferences!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milagros Orcoyen', is written in a cursive style.

Milagros Orcoyen

2023-2024 Vice President of Events and Fundraising
vpevents@psa.org

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Committee Structure

Hosting a District Conference is a huge task, and it cannot be completed by a conference coordinator. The committee structure and role descriptions below are a suggested way to organize members of your Chapter and evenly distribute the workload. It should be modified according to your Chapter's specific needs and conference requirements.

Conference Coordinator

- Oversees all members of the conference committee, keeps tasks on schedule and assists in any tasks that need help.
- Primary liaison between PRSSA National, PRSA Chapters, University and hosting Chapter.
- Oversees registration and cancellation process.
- Works closely with programming director to create schedule, secure space in-person, hybrid or virtual for event and confirm speakers/workshops.
- Oversees budget with director of sponsorship.

Director of Programming

- Coordinates guests and keynote speakers.
- Primary liaison for guests before and during the conference.
- Develops conference sessions, special events and schedule.
- Assists in securing event space in-person, virtual or hybrid.

Director of Sponsorship

- Identifies and secures potential donors to cover conference costs, provide equipment, etc.
- Develops sponsorship packet and pitch materials.
- Coordinates recognition of sponsors and tracks sponsor invoices.
- Works with conference coordinator to oversee budget.
- May work with other committee members to help with pitching sponsors.

Director of Hospitality

- Coordinates meals and refreshments for the conference.
- Contracts conference hotel and any transportation for guests from hotel to event space.
- Handles any giveaways, hospitality bags, name badges, etc.
- Works with director of sponsorship to identify food sponsors.
- Coordinates virtual event platform or hybrid event elements, if applicable.

Director of Promotions

- Develops communications plan for registered attendees.
- Designs all conference promotional materials.
- Responsible for consistent population of conference social media accounts before and during the conference.
- Works with director of community relations to handle attendee recruitment.

Director of Community Relations

- Works with director of promotions to identify possible attendees.
- Manages the high school outreach and develops plan to recruit these students, if applicable.
- Oversees conference community service.
- Develops strategy for recruiting attendees from community colleges and universities in the area without PRSSA Chapters.
- Creates plan for conference diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiative.

Conference Coordinator

Secure Your Space

You can't host an amazing event without a space to hold it!

Things to Consider:

- Conference type (In person, virtual or hybrid)
- Location
- Goal/Estimated Attendees
- Price
- Accessibility/Risk
- Layout

Book early, book now. Without a place to host, you have no event! If you are hosting an in-person conference, make sure you secure your space as soon as you are notified that you will be hosting. Waiting on booking the event space may lead to losing the space to another event, an increase in price or a different complication that could lead to the cancellation of your District Conference all together. Although virtual event spaces may not get booked the same way that in-person ones will, deciding right away which virtual or hybrid event platform you are going to use is crucial. This will help with the budgeting and promotion of your event, and you will need to know this information to share it with potential speakers and sponsors. Whatever format your conference takes, it's important you secure your event space right away to ensure success moving forward.

Location

When selecting a space, consider the location of the venue. The location of the conference can greatly enhance the attendee experience and make other aspects of the planning process easier to navigate!

- Will your venue be on-campus, off-campus, in the conference hotel or somewhere else?
- Is there reliable transportation from your conference hotel to this space?
- Will you host on campus or close to a city/other desirable location?
- Will your event be online? If so, what kind of security will you have in place? Will the platform you are using allow for virtual networking opportunities?

Attendee Numbers

Make sure your space has the capability to hold your goal number of attendees. A space that is too large will make the conference seem empty and less exciting, while a space too small can cause logistical issues and potential hazards.

- What is the maximum capacity for this venue/platform?
- Can parts of the space be closed off/opened if numbers are below/above your goal?

Price

Always keep your budget in mind. Your District Conference is a huge opportunity for Chapter fundraising. Be sure to get an estimated cost for the venue/platform and any potential additional charges.

- Does the space have additional costs? (cleaning fee, fee for WIFI, etc.)
- Do you have to pay for the virtual platform you want to use?

Budget

District Conferences should act as a huge fundraising opportunity. Keep track of your finances to make the most out of all of your hard work!

In order to understand what kind of sponsorship outreach your team needs to do, you need an initial budget. Using the [template](#) below you can help you create an estimate of what you think your expenses will be. This will help you and your committee gauge how many sponsors you need, your goal sponsorship amount and what monetary levels to include in your sponsorship recruitment packet.

After creating your estimated budget, track your expenses in the same format to make sure you are on the path to reaching your sponsorship needs and ending the event with a profit. This will also allow you to see where you are spending the majority of your money and where costs can be cut.

District Conference 2024 Budget				
Item	Estimated Expense	Actual Expense	Status (Paid/Need to Pay)	Notes
Total	\$	\$		

Sponsorship Estimated	\$	Actual Sponsorship	\$
Registration Profit Estimated	\$	Actual Registration Profit	\$
Total Estimated Expenses	\$	Total Actual Expenses	\$
Total Estimated Revenue	\$	Total Revenue	\$

Website and Registration

For the 2024 District Conference season, all hosting Chapters must create a website for their event. It doesn't have to be a separate website from your Chapter's current website. It can be a page on your Chapter's current site, as long as the conference's page has its own space and direct link. This may include the registration website. Below are some recommendations to consider when building your site.

Website Builders/Event Hosting Sites:

- Wix.com
- Eventbrite.com
- Wordpress.com
- Google Sites

What to Include:

- Registration link
- District Conference schedule
- Parking, lodging, venue directions
- Speaker bios and information
- FAQ's
- Information for local attractions/restaurants
- Contact information for committee
- Virtual platform details
- Cost of registration
- Overview of District Conference
- Refund policy
- Past District Conference Website Examples:
[Boston University](#), [Temple University](#), [University of South Carolina](#), [DePaul University](#) and [Columbia College Chicago](#)

Registration

Determining a price:

- Keeping your budget, goal attendance and estimated expenses in mind, determine how much registration should cost. Some of the expenses to consider include meals, speaker travel and event decorations.
- Consider having different prices based on the type of attendee, such as charging non-PRSSA members a higher rate or high schoolers a lower rate to encourage more dues paying Chapter members and high schoolers to attend.

Registrant Information:

- Don't forget to collect information from your registrants along with their payment. You will need an email to keep in contact, an emergency contact to have on file, any important medical information (allergies, dietary restrictions) in case of emergency and a phone number.

Return Policy: Some attendees will decide they cannot attend District Conference last minute and, if you are relying on these funds, giving a number of refunds could be extremely stressful. Make sure there is a clear return policy on your website so that there is no confusion and you will know what to do in the case of refund requests and reservation changes.

Sample Return Policy: Refund of the conference registration fee will be made if written notice of cancellation is postmarked no later than DATE. Registrants whose cancellation requests are postmarked after DATE, will NOT be entitled to a refund. Cancellation of registration for this event must be made in writing and mailed to CHAPTER NAME at ADDRESS. Substitute attendees will be permitted (with email confirmation) until DATE.

Director of Programming

Call for Speakers

Two of the biggest conference selling points are who's there and what attendees can do.

Things to Consider:

- Conference theme
- Travel costs
- Using your network
- Risk/cancellation
- Virtual networking and social opportunities

Your speakers and programming are the reason attendees will choose your conference. Think about what your conference theme is, what sessions would make your event unique and who YOU would like to learn from. Chances are, other students would like to learn from them too.

Speaker Topics Ideas:

- AI and Communications
- Data Marketing Communications
- Influencer Marketing Young Pro's
- The Future of PR
- Experiential Marketing
- PR in a Social Media World
- Crisis Communications
- Purpose-driven PR
- Resume and Interview Tips
- Build Your Online Brand Presence
- What Does Chat GPT Mean for Communicators?

Costs

When calling for speakers, determine if you will be paying for travel, lodging and other fees for them. Make sure you are clear about what costs will be covered when asking speakers to participate.

- Be sure to factor any costs in to your budget. Will using speakers from out of town break the budget?
- Will using all local speakers draw a local crowd? How much are you willing to spend on speaker fees?

It is not required you pay for speaker travel, meals or other fees, but you MUST be professional and straight forward about what will be covered/provided. It is STRONGLY recommended you provide a gift/thank you to speakers following their sessions.

Sourcing Speakers

Lucky for you, PRSSA opens an endless number of connections to professionals! Use your connection with our Champions for PRSSA, PRSA board members, your local PRSA Chapter, your Faculty Adviser and other students to connect with speakers that peak your interest and align with your conference theme. And don't forget about your university alumni! They may be interested in participating. Using a direct, strong connection will peak the interest of potential speakers. Never be afraid to ask, the worst that can happen is a speaker says no.

Risk

Make sure to have a list of more speakers than you need. Ask your top choice speakers ASAP. If potential speakers pass on the opportunity, thank them for their consideration and immediately go down your list to a backup speaker.

Consider what you would do in the event if a speaker cancels the day of your conference. If they are part of a breakout session, can you drop the session and not worry about having one less? If they are a keynote, do you have a speaker/faculty member/other presentation that can fill in on short notice? It is not a bad idea to create a presentation that can be used to fill unforeseen gaps or ask a university staff/faculty member to be on-call as a fill in speaker. Below are some resources you can use in your quest to secure a lineup of speakers the whole Society will be talking about.

Resources:

- [linkedin.com/company/prsa](https://www.linkedin.com/company/prsa)
- champions.prsa.org
- prsa.org/docs/default-source/prssa-docs/chapter-firm-resources/2021-sponsor-list_prssa-chapter.pdf?sfvrsn=186cb785_8

Priority (1-#)	Speaker Name	Prof. Title	Topic	Outreach Date	Status	Session Time	Session Title	Head shot	Bio	Session Room	Intro By	Slide Deck?

Call for Speaker Template

Hello SPEAKER NAME!

I hope this message finds you well. The **CHAPTER NAME** of PRSSA recently won a bid to host a District Conference in 2024. This initiative is entirely student driven and will attract students eager to learn from professionals like you! The theme of the conference is **THEME**, and we are focusing on recruiting amazing professionals like yourself to speak about **TOPIC**. **CONFERENCE NAME** will be held **DATE** in **LOCATION/FORMAT**.

After reviewing our network of professionals, we compiled a short list of professionals we would love to learn from and invite to speak! You were at the top of that list.

If you are available and interested in learning more, I'd love to connect with you further about the conference. Additionally, **SPONSOR** has agreed to sponsor your presentation and will cover your travel and lodging. If you are unavailable, please also let me know.

Let me know if you might consider joining us at **CONFERENCE NAME** to share your expertise with PRSSA students from all over!

Best,
SPEAKER LIASON NAME, SPEAKER LISAON TITLE, SPEAKER LIASON CONTACT

Notes:

- Link relevant content, this may include a conference website, links to the PRSSA homepage, your Chapter/ conference social media, etc.
- Feel free to customize, remove and add content!

Director of Sponsorship

Obtaining Revenue

Make the most out of your District Conference for your Chapter fundraising!

Things to Consider:

- Alignment of potential sponsor values and District Conference purpose
- Value of in-kind donations
- Importance of District Conference fundraising outside of sponsorship asks

While sponsorship is a great way to cover conference costs, please understand that it can be extremely difficult to secure sponsors. Ensure that your Chapter is conducting external fundraisers to help cover expenses.

NOTE: [Visit the Fundraising and Sponsorship Guide](#) for ideas.

Sponsorship Letter Template

The **UNIVERSITY NAME** Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Chapter would like to invite you to participate in our **DISTRICT CONFERENCE TITLE** as a corporate sponsor. The conference will be held **DATE** in **LOCATION/FORMAT**. It will feature **INFORMATION ABOUT CONFERENCE**. This event is expected to be highly attended by **ATTENDEE INFO (DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXPECTED NUMBERS)**. Furthermore, your support will be broadcast to the full network of current PRSSA members that is made up of thousands of students. Sponsorship opportunities are available at different levels:

Sponsor Level 1:

- \$ Amount
- Incentives

Sponsor Level 2:

- \$ Amount
- Incentives

Sponsor Level 3:

- \$ Amount
- Incentives

If you would like to discuss a customized sponsorship opportunity or participate as a corporate sponsor, please contact **CONTACT INFO FOR DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIP**.

Sponsorship Agreement

Once you secure a verbal, or informal email, commitment, be sure to follow up with a formal document for them to sign to confirm the partnership. **NOTE:** Please ensure you are informed of any potential restrictions your university has about obtaining sponsorship or accepting donations.

Sponsorship Agreement Template

I, Print Name of Sponsorship Contact, agree to the following terms of sponsorship between Business or Organization Sponsoring and PRSSA Chapter Name.

List Sponsorship Level and Donations/Incentives that will be Exchanged

Signature of Contact. Date Signature of PRSSA Contact Date

Sponsorship Invoice Template

Invoice No: _____

Invoice Date: _____

Due Date: _____

P.O. Box: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____

BILL TO:

Sponsor Contact: _____

Company: _____

P.O. Box: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

FOR: _____

Conference Title: _____ Date of Conference: _____

Sponsorship Level: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Make all checks payable to CHAPTER NAME

Thank you for your support!

Director of Hospitality

In-Kind Donations

District Conferences can be long events. Make sure you keep your attendees hydrated and fed to help them focus and have the best experience!

Things to Consider:

- How many meals will you cover?
- Food allergies
- Does your event space offer catering? Is this the most cost-effective option?
- Does your event space have access to drinking water?
- Do you need water coolers? Do you need bottled water?
- Will you provide virtual attendees with any food or beverage?

In-Kind Donation Outreach Template (Media Release Style):

On **DATE**, **CHAPTER NAME** will be hosting **CONFERENCE NAME** at **LOCATION**. The organization is currently seeking in-kind donations for **CONFERENCE NAME**. **CONFERENCE INFORMATION**. Businesses interested in supporting **CONFERENCE NAME** are welcome to donate **IN-KIND ASK**. PRSSA is grateful for any donation and thanks you for supporting its efforts in **REASON FOR EVENT**. PRSSA is willing to pick-up any item at the most convenient time for you before **DATE**. If you have any questions, please contact **CONTACT**. Thank you for your interest and support!

Hospitality Partner Tracker:

Partner Name	Contact Method	Ask	Outreach Date	Status

Director of Promotions

Branding and Promotions

Attendees and speakers can't attend your conference unless they know it's happening. Spread the word about your District Conference far and wide!

Things to Consider:

- Communications channels
 - Social media
 - Website
 - Email marketing
- Design committee
 - Create social media graphics, monitor channels
 - Manage website updates
 - Design print materials/program
- Recruitment Powerpoint
 - Useful for classroom visits and promotion for other Chapters to use at meetings

Note: All District Conferences MUST have an event website.

Past District Conference Logo Examples:



Audiences to Consider:

- Chapters in your District
- Chapters within a certain hour range
- Local Universities/Colleges without Chapters
- Local Community Colleges
- Local High Schools
- Local Industry Professionals
- Faculty/Staff at Local Universities/Colleges

Social Media Template

- Label with correct months/dates
- Color code day based on post type: Speaker feature, sponsor shout out, etc.
- If your budget allows, pre-schedule each month using a posting tool (Buffer/Hootsuite)

MONTH						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Director of Community Relations

Community Engagement

Recruit early! Reach out to local high schools and introduce them to the exciting world of public relations and the benefits of PRSSA. Connect with your community through service. Make diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging a priority at your conference.

High School Outreach Ideas:

- **Buddy System**
 - Pair attending high schoolers with reliable Chapter members to encourage relationships between high school students and your PRSSA Chapter.
- **High School Info Panel**
 - Host a “High Schooler Exclusive” Panel during your conference where PRSSA members chat about college, internships and PRSSA

High School Outreach Tracker

High School Name	Contact Name	Contact Title	Contact Method	Outreach Date	Status

Community Service Initiative

Ideas:

- Collect cans/non-perishable foods for a local pantry.
- Collect toys/school supplies for a local school or shelter.
- Create communications/marketing materials for a local charity through a “day-of” CreateAThon style competition.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Initiative

Ideas:

- Make sure your speaker lineup includes a diverse group of individuals who can provide representation to a range of audiences and communities.
- For an in-person meeting, you can provide pronoun stickers for badges.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has a set of [guidelines](#) that event organizers can use to make events accessible to people with disabilities.
- Provide real-time translations to multiple languages during your virtual conference for global participation.
- Visit the [PRSSA Diversity Toolkit](#) for more information and ideas on how to include DE&I initiatives in the planning of your conference.

PRSSA

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