



# **GFWC Meeting Planning Guide**

*A Beginner's Resource to Shaping a Successful Event*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Are you at a loss for where to begin planning your next district, state, or region meeting? Fear not! The *GFWC Meeting Planning Guide* will help you gain an overview of the fundamentals which are essential in preparing for any meeting. An engaging GFWC meeting can help promote volunteer initiatives, build and maintain club member relationships, and provide the opportunity to make essential governance and organizational decisions—and it all comes together through careful planning.

We hope that this guide proves to be a valuable resource. For questions, please contact GFWC using the information below.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **STEPS TO STRESS-FREE PLANNING**

### *Gathering Information*

If your meeting has been held before, the first step in planning is to gather as much history on past meetings as possible. The best sources for this information are:

- 1) Meeting Agenda—This will provide you with a framework for the meeting.
- 2) Master Bill—This can provide you with the prices charged for meal functions, guest rooms, meeting space, as well as the actual number of people that attended.
- 3) Banquet Event Orders—BEOs will include information on the number of meeting rooms used, room set-up, and menus.
- 4) Correspondence—Provide a timeline of communication and deadlines.
- 5) Meeting Resume—Often requested by hotels and convention centers, this will provide an outline of the meeting, including much of the information above.

If you are starting from scratch, then the first step for planning a meeting is to brainstorm on the meeting logistics, including:

- 1) Purpose of the Meeting—Is it to educate, to inform, to celebrate, or to network?
- 2) Meeting Location—Would your best fit be a hotel, convention center, library, or perhaps a unique venue?
- 3) Meeting Dates and Pattern—Does your group prefer a weekend or week day, overnight, a specific month, or specific dates?

*Helpful hint: If you are flexible with your meeting dates, ask the hotel/locations you are interested in if they have “off” times where room rates and rental fees are at their lowest.*

- 4) Attendees—Number of attendees on a daily basis and over the dates of the meeting.
- 5) Meeting Rooms—Number and size of meeting rooms needed on a daily basis.
- 6) Guest Rooms—Number and type of guest rooms needed on a daily basis.
- 7) Food and Beverage Functions—Number and type of food and beverage functions and how many guests may attend.
- 8) Entertainment and Speakers—Budget and timing of entertainment and speakers.
- 9) Exhibits—Tabletops or booths and if you will hire an exhibit services company for set up and decoration.
- 10) Tours—Time for tours prior to or during the meeting and if you will work with a Destination Management Company.
- 11) Special Needs—ADA accessibility, number of double or king bedded rooms necessary, hotel services.

## *Request for Proposal*

After gathering the meeting details, it is time to put together a Request for Proposal. Most meeting sites prefer that a planner submit a RFP when contacted, as it is the preferred method of providing you, as the meeting planner, with all the information you need to consider the hotel's proposal.

The RFP should include the following:

- 1) Introduction—A brief description of your group and why you are holding this meeting.
- 2) Preferred Meeting Dates—Preferred meeting dates with an arrival and departure pattern. If there is any flexibility, such as being able to meet any time during the months of June, over a weekend, then definitely include that information as it could get you lower rates.
- 3) Past and Future Meeting Sites— include at least five years of past meeting sites, including the location name and city. If this is the first time that this meeting is being held, then provide information regarding the purpose of this meeting in the introduction.
- 4) Guest Room Requirements—Also called a Room Block, requested room rate and number of guest rooms needed on a per night basis.

*Helpful Hint: Research published room rates over your preferred dates at your preferred location and nearby hotels, to make sure that the room rates you are requesting are not higher than what is already being offered.*

- 5) Additional Considerations—This is where you should put all your “wish list” items, such as asking for one complimentary room night for every 40 room nights sold; complimentary suites for VIPs; discounted audiovisual equipment; complimentary or discounted meeting space; and anything else that is important to your group's specific needs.

*Helpful Hint: Remember that if you do not ask you shall not receive.*

- 6) Food and Beverage—Budget per person or per meal function, along with requesting a current set of menus along with the proposal.

*Helpful Hint: Keep in mind when budgeting to add on service charges (which may or may not be taxable, and could be as high as 25 percent) and any additional taxes. Request that all fees, charges, and taxes be listed and included in any contract.*

- 7) Meeting Space Requirements—Also called meeting specifications, this is a preliminary meeting agenda with approximate number of attendees and times of plenary sessions, breakout sessions,

meal functions, office space, and meeting registration locations, as well as the set-up for those rooms, such as theater, classroom, banquet, conference, hollow square, or reception.

- 8) Additional Information Needed for Decision making—General notes regarding your group, such as unique room set-ups, guest services, and amenities both onsite and nearby; individual guest room amenities; parking rates; transportation costs and availability between location and airport; business center price list; and audiovisual services.
- 9) Proposal Submission—Include the name and contact information for the person who should receive the proposal, as well as a deadline.

### *Selecting a Meeting Venue*

Once the RFP is complete, it is time to seek the appropriate meeting venue.

Many planners of smaller meetings dismiss the help that can be provided by a Convention and Visitor Bureau or a Convention and Visitor Association thinking that their groups are too small to be of any interest to them. This is definitely not the case. A CVB or CVA often can be one of your biggest advocates—they are best able to calculate and promote the overall economic impact of your group to a hotel, area restaurants, local attractions, sporting and entertainment events, and transportation.

CVBs and CVAs are not-for-profit umbrella organizations that represent a specific city or destination. Most are membership organizations that are funded by membership dues, government funding, and a percentage of local hotel taxes. A CVB/CVA specializes in bringing together area businesses that depend on travel, tourism, and the meetings market.

While not every city or town has a CVB or CVA, almost all have a chamber of commerce that is available to provide a planner with some of the same services.

As you begin your search for a meeting site, pick up the phone or turn on the computer and contact these resources. Let them be your advocate.

### **REVIEWING PROPOSALS**

Once you have gathered your proposals, it is time to review them—prior to asking for the hotel to provide a contract. When reviewing each proposal, consider the following:

#### *Be honest with your budget and attendance numbers*

Honesty helps build a strong relationship between the planner and a property. The property will not risk

losing potential revenue or other business and your group will reduce the chances of incurring potentially large attrition or cancellation fees. Being honest with your numbers helps both parties come out ahead.

#### *Review your group's history for space and credit*

If you plan on hosting meetings for years to come, building a history is very important. Hotels and other meeting sites look for clients that do not under or over book rooms, pay their bill on time, and meet their revenue projections. Having a strong history also helps by allowing your group to establish a master account with your property rather than having to pay up-front.

#### *Stay flexible with your meeting dates and meeting space needs*

By remaining flexible throughout the initial stages of planning, you allow the potential property to review their current bookings and find a time when they can offer you the best rates. For example, some properties do more business during the week, catering to business travelers, and would give you a better rate if you were willing to hold your meeting over a weekend.

#### *Consider ways to use less meeting space*

Review your preliminary agenda and try to reduce the number of breakout sessions that run concurrently. Most hotels charge for meeting space based on the number of sleeping rooms that your group utilizes. Therefore, the fewer sleeping rooms you plan on using, the more important it becomes to limit the number of meeting rooms you require.

#### *Inquire about plans for renovations*

Major renovations can not only infringe upon your required space but may distract the site staff. You deserve to have an attentive staff and an uninterrupted program. Hotels are required to disclose information on future renovations if asked. If the property you select is planning renovations, retain a guarantee from them that those renovations will not interrupt or otherwise affect your program.

#### *Determine your transportation needs*

How will the attendees be traveling to and from the meeting? If a large number of attendees will travel by air, consider booking a hotel that provides a complimentary airport shuttle service. If a high percentage of attendees will be driving to the meeting, secure a property that provides complimentary or reduced rate parking. If the meeting is being held at several different sites, budget enough time in the agenda for attendees to travel from one site to another.

#### *Consider offsite attractions*

Consider the activities that your attendees may want to engage in offsite. Does your group prefer to be

located closer to an airport, shopping, restaurants, historical attractions, golf courses, mountains, or the beach?

#### *Determine your audiovisual needs*

Does your meeting agenda require a lot of audiovisual equipment? If so, review the audiovisual price lists of potential sites. Many hotels will provide one microphone complimentary for each meeting but will charge for anything else. Just adding a second microphone to a meeting could cost your organization an additional \$100/day, plus a taxable service charge. If you have several meetings that require the same additional audiovisual equipment, such as an LCD projector, consider holding them back-to-back in the same room on the same day. Hotels often charge for equipment only once if it remains in the same space all day.

Properties will usually allow you to bring in your own audiovisual equipment, so if you already have access to an LCD projector and laptop you will not need to rent these items. Make sure to clarify with your convention services manager whether or not there will be a fee added for any equipment that you do not rent through the property. If you are planning to use an audiovisual company other than the one at the property, also clarify whether any fees will apply.

#### *Determine whether your group will fill a potential property to capacity*

This is critical. If you are not being treated like a big fish, you are probably swimming in the wrong pond. You will have less negotiating power and will inevitably pay more for your meeting if you are only utilizing a small portion of a property's space. It is music to a salesperson's ears if you can promise to utilize 175-200 of their 250 rooms. Use this to your advantage and seek out properties that your group will fill to capacity.

### **CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL SITE VISIT**

Even with the help of a CVB and all the glossy pictures you will receive it is very difficult to determine what a facility is really like without an in-person site inspection. Therefore, once you have reviewed the proposals and have considered all of the points listed above, narrow your choices down and schedule a site inspection. If necessary, you may set-up site inspections with more than one property. When planning your site visit be certain to:

#### *Establish an agenda for each site visit you schedule*

Include the objective of your visit as well as the goals that you hope to achieve. Having a prepared list of objectives, goals, questions, and concerns will help ensure that your visit is productive and successful.

#### *Stay overnight*

If the property you are visiting is a hotel, staying overnight onsite will help you judge the level of customer

service exhibited by the hotel staff. How long did it take you to check in? Was the bell staff courteous? Was your luggage delivered to your room promptly? Are the sleeping rooms clean, comfortable, and convenient to the hotel's facilities?

#### *Eat at the restaurants on-site*

You want to experience the quality of the food as well as the atmosphere and service in the dining rooms that your attendees will frequent.

#### *Tour the property at least twice*

First, have your sales contact take you on a tour of the property. Then, on your own, walk the property a second time. It often takes more than one tour to catch everything. Note the size and layout of meeting rooms. Are there pillars or other space obstructions in any of the rooms? Are the rooms easily accessible by elevator, escalator, or stairway? Are the meeting rooms well designed? Do you find it difficult to find your way around? Are the restrooms near the meeting space? Does the facility meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements?

#### *Bring someone with you*

Four eyes are always better than two. With at least two people touring a potential site you increase the likelihood that you will catch all of the good and bad qualities of a property.

#### *Do not commit to anything*

The purpose of a site visit is to inspect the property, not to sign a contract. If you begin to feel pressured by site staff to sign an agreement or contract while onsite, leave. Reputable hotels understand the site inspection process and will give you an opportunity to absorb all that you have seen. Expect them to contact you after you complete your visit and return home.

## **MEETING CONTRACTS & NEGOTIATION**

Now that you have solicited proposals and visited those sites that appear acceptable, you are ready to make a selection, solicit a contract, and begin negotiating.

Make a decision on the property that you feel best meets your group's needs. Request that your sales contact at that property draft a contract for your review. S/he will draft a contract for your meeting based on your RFP, your discussions with their staff, and your site inspection. Once you receive this draft, review it very carefully and:

#### *Never EVER accept the first offer*

The first proposal or contract that you receive from the hotel is always written with their best interests in mind.

*Know the difference between need and want*

You may need a room rate under \$100 a night, but you might want seven suite upgrades. Only you know what you need. Make a list and prioritize the list by placing the most important items first. These are what you should negotiate for first.

*If you do not ask, you shall not receive*

There is no harm in asking for the general manager to wear a duck suit and address your attendees at the opening session if that is what you really need and want. The worst thing they can say is, “no.”

*If it is not in the contract, it doesn't exist*

When you ask for something from the hotel before you have a signed contract, it is called negotiating. If you ask for it after you have signed the contract it is called begging.

Unfortunately, the same salesperson who promised you the duck suit and opening session serenade may not be there to make good on the promise. Ensuring that everything is in writing will protect you from fighting unnecessary battles down the road.

*Get rid of ambiguity*

One of the most difficult situations you can be in with a hotel is attempting to work out what the words *average*, *ample*, *appropriate*, *reasonable*, and *to be determined* mean to both the group and the hotel.

At any point in the contract where you see these words, define them. For example, change “cancellation charges will be determined by multiplying the ‘average’ menu prices” to “cancellation charges will be determined by multiplying \$32.00...”

*Strike unilateral decisions*

It is not uncommon for the hotel to add language to a contract that states, “The hotel will determine distribution of meeting space six months prior to meeting.” Instead, consider, “the Hotel and the Group will mutually determine, in writing, the distribution...” These are joint decisions and should be stated as such in the contract.

*Just because it's free now, doesn't mean it will always be so*

If you are sold on the hotel because it offers its guests complimentary shuttle service between the airport and

the hotel, a glass of champagne at check-in, and free local and 800 number calls, get it in writing in the contract. These types of perks regularly change based on the market and other hotels. What is free today might not be free tomorrow.

*There is no such thing as a win-win situation*

Negotiating a contract is not a game that you win...or lose. A contract is simply a written document that outlines the partnership between the group and the hotel. Remember that once the contract is signed, it is just the first step in the relationship between you and the hotel.

*Seek legal counsel*

**If possible, retain legal counsel. There are many intricacies to meeting contracts. The points mentioned above are designed to guide you; however, there is no substitute for having an attorney review your contracts from a legal standpoint.**

## **MEETING ROOM SETUPS**

### *Theater*

Seats or chairs in rows facing a stage area, head table, or speaker (with no conference table)

- Most efficient set-up when the attendees will act as an audience.
- Good for large groups and if minimal group interaction is required.
- Not recommended for food events or if note taking is required.

### *U-Shape*

A series of conference tables set in the shape of the letter U, with chairs around the outside.

- Used for Board of Directors meetings, committee meetings, or discussion groups where there is a speaker, audiovisual presentation or other focal point.
- Provides good interaction between participant and workspace.
- Not ideal for larger groups.

### *Classroom*

Rows of conference tables with chairs facing the front of a room.

- Used when there is a speaker. Allows presenter to see all participants and can accommodate large groups in less space.
- Ideal for note taking, meetings requiring multiple handouts or reference materials, or other tools such as laptop computers.
- Most comfortable set-up for long sessions and allows refreshments to be placed within reach of each attendee.
- Not recommended if interaction between participants is required because participants can only see each other's backs.

### *Conference or Boardroom*

A rectangular or oval table set up with chairs around all sides and ends.

- Used for Board of Directors meetings, committee meetings, or discussion groups.
- Provides good work space and allows for interaction between participants
- Not recommended for audio-visual presentations, speakers or larger groups

### *Hollow*

Square conference tables arranged in a square (or rectangle), leaving the center open. Chairs are placed around the outside of the tables.

- Best for meetings of 12-30 people, where group interaction among attendees is important.
- Provides workspace for each person and good communication and visual lines for each person.
- Not recommended if meetings has a designated leader or presenter.

### *Banquet Rounds*

A group of round tables, each seating 6-10 people usually, set to facilitate serving food, usually in a hexagonal or square design.

- Primarily used for meal functions or small business meetings involving group interaction.
- Half rounds: Seating around half of the table so all are facing towards the front allowing everyone to face a presenter.

### *Reception or Cocktail*

Small, round cocktail/reception tables with chairs. Tall tables are positioned uniformly to allow for even coverage of the banquet room and standing room only. This is an ideal setup for cocktail parties and receptions.

## CONTRACT CLAUSES

**Attrition.** Allowed decrease in room nights and/or food and beverage revenue from date the contract is signed to the actual event before penalties or attrition fees are charged to the Group. This clause should contain the following:

- Last date to adjust the room block without penalty
- Total percentage of room block that you may reduce over time
- Formula for determining any attrition fees your group may owe the hotel if you do not pick up the agreed upon number of rooms in your block

**Cancellation.** Pre-determined amount owed by the Group to the Hotel AND the amount owed by the Hotel to the Group if either party without cause cancels the meeting.

**Choice of Law and Venue.** The state in which laws will take precedence in any legal dispute. If you are negotiating a contract for a property that is not in your state, you will want to seek that your state is the venue in case of any legal dispute.

**Considerations/Concessions.** Incentives or concessions hotel will provide to Group for its business, such as complimentary suites and meeting space, VIP amenities, and complimentary room credits.

**Credit Arrangements/Master Accounts.** Outline of property's policy for extending the group credit for a master account. This should include payment terms.

**Cutoff and Review Dates.** Date the Hotel will hold the rooms in the Group's room block, and dates when the Hotel and the Group will review the pick-up to see if any adjustment needs to be made to the Group's sleeping and meeting room block.

**Event Dates.** Include dates that you want to be included as shoulder dates both prior and following the actual meeting dates.

**Food and Beverage.** Maximum amount menu prices can increase per year. This is usually done on a percentage basis.

**Force Majeure.** Standard contract clause that exempts either party from liability or penalty for non-fulfillment of services owing to acts of God or conditions beyond either party's control. Also known as the Acts of God, Impossibility, or Rights of Termination clause. This allows cancellation of the event by either the Group or the property without liability or penalty.

**Indemnification.** Also known as the Hold Harmless clause. Releases both the property and Group from liability in specified circumstances when the other party is at fault.

**Insurance.** Amount that the property should have in insurance to protect itself against claims arising out of any activities that are conducted in the property during the Group's event.

**Mitigation.** Agreement that the hotel will attempt to sell meeting space or sleeping rooms to offset any penalties and attrition fees for the cancellation (in whole or part) of the event by the Group.

**Rate Protection.** Clause that prevents the Hotel from selling non-group block rooms at a lower rate than the Group's room rate.

**Relocation of Guests.** Procedure for putting guests in to alternate hotels due to overbooking.

**Renovation.** Procedure and timeline for the property to notify Group of any renovation that will take place which will affect the Event, and options that the Group has to cancel the Event based on this information.

**Reports.** Timeline for Hotel to provide the Group with information on the Group's pick-up and other relevant meeting information. This should also include dates for post-meeting reports from the Hotel and what information those reports will include.

**Reservation Policy.** How reservations will be made by the Group (individual, rooming list) and how the Hotel will accept reservations (800 number, direct to the hotel, customized group Web page).

**Room Block.** Number and type of rooms by date that the Hotel is holding for the Group over the event dates.

**Room Rates.** Negotiated group rate to which all Group attendees are entitled.

## **CHECKLISTS**

### *Food and Beverage Checklist*

- 1) What is the estimated attendance?
- 2) What are the table linen choices?
- 3) Are centerpieces and decorations needed for head and buffet tables?
- 4) How many places are required at the head table? Will the head table be on a platform?
- 5) Is a floor or table lectern needed? Where should it be placed?
- 6) Is a microphone needed? If so, what type and where?
- 7) How much time is needed for set-up? When will the room be accessible?
- 8) Are the meals to be served at the head table, or will dignitaries take their places from reserved tables after the meal?
- 9) If service is buffet style, are head table guests to serve themselves, or are servers to prepare their plates?
- 10) If meal tickets are to be collected, who will collect them and where? At the door or at the table?
- 11) How are late arrivals without tickets to be handled?
- 12) Are tickets required for head table guests?
- 13) Is a registration or supply table needed outside the function room? Is an award table needed behind the head table?
- 14) Are programs or menus to be placed on tables or chairs or distributed at the door?
- 15) Is a room needed for VIPs prior to the function?
- 16) Must special arrangements be made for guests with dietary restrictions?
- 17) Are there banners to be placed?
- 18) Is a coat check room needed?
- 19) If awardees are seated in the audience, how will they approach the lectern? Will a spotlight be used to illuminate their approach to the platform? Is the master of ceremonies to be spotlighted?
- 20) Is the national anthem to be played? In the United States, the American flag is required. (The American flag must always be displayed to stage right and state flags to stage left.)
- 21) Will there be an audiovisual presentation? What type?
- 22) Is background or dance music planned?
- 23) Will there be a show or entertainment (including a band) for which an additional stage or platform is needed? If so, what size and height?
- 24) Are platforms and stages to be skirted and/or carpeted? Are there lighted stairs with handrails?
- 25) Is a rehearsal planned? When?
- 26) At what time will the doors be opened?
- 27) What is the timing for all aspects of the event? Pre-program music, entertainment, meal service timing, formal program and presentation, dancing, etc.)
- 28) Where are the restrooms? What arrangements should be made to allow guests to re-enter the function room if door controls will be in place?

## *Site Inspection Checklist*

### **Accessibility (Air and Ground)**

- 1) Number of flights and passenger seats?
- 2) Nonstop service from which cities?
- 3) Total flight time, including connections?
- 4) Location on major interstates?
- 5) Anticipated road construction or detours en route?
- 6) Heavy traffic areas en route?
- 7) Travel between airport and hotels

### **Local Area**

- 1) Local taxes? Sales tax? Occupancy tax? Upcoming changes?
- 2) Any special alcohol-related rules, regulations?
- 3) Meeting-related policies or licenses?
- 4) Public transportation available?
- 5) Taxis and limousines readily available?
- 6) Climate?
- 7) Daily cost of destination?
- 8) Support and services available from the local convention bureau? Bureau service fees? What services provided complimentary during meeting? Prior to meeting?
- 9) Availability of local attractions? Shopping? Recreation? Restaurants?
- 10) Economic health of community?
- 11) Reputation of area and facility for hosting meetings?
- 12) Availability of experienced suppliers, such as audiovisual firms, exhibit service contractors, temporary help and security?

### **Meeting Space**

- 1) Charges for setups and tear downs?
- 2) Standard set time at least one hour prior to event start?
- 3) Pads, pens, water glasses and water provided at no cost?
- 4) Air conditioning/heating?
- 5) Adequate lighting and ventilation?
- 6) Audiovisual equipment available on site?
- 7) Which rooms wired/not wired for sound?
- 8) Is there wireless access for attendees in meeting space? Free or at a cost? Can wireless capabilities at hotel manage all attendees technology needs?

- 9) Will facility allow an outside contractor to handle the audiovisual?
- 10) Internet/computer access in meeting rooms?
- 11) Handicapped facilities
- 12) How close is the kitchen to meal function room(s)?
- 13) Where are restrooms, pay phones?

### **Food & Beverage**

- 1) Number and types of restaurants? Hours of operation? Price?
- 2) Hours of room service? From restaurants? Delivered to meeting rooms?
- 3) Menus for special needs? At a reduced price?
- 4) What is the tax rate? What is the service charge/gratuuity percentage? Is the service charge/gratuuity taxed?
- 5) What is the standard server to guest ratio? Can this be specified in the contract?
- 6) What size table rounds are available? How many do you normally seat at 60", 66" and 70"?
- 7) What linen colors are available at no additional charge? Do tables have double linen? Overlays?
- 8) What items are available at no additional charge for centerpieces?
- 9) Is leftover food donated to a food bank?

### **Guest Rooms**

- 1) In-room amenities?
- 2) Telephones (how many lines, voicemail), fax machines? How much for local, long distance calls? Fee for credit card calls?
- 3) Is there both wired and wireless Internet access in the rooms? Free or by fee? Is free or fee-access to wireless transferrable to meeting space?

### **Guest Services**

- 1) Business Center? How much for each fax? Copies? Internet access? Package delivery? Price list and other services offered?
- 2) Fitness Center? Pool? Access to nearby fitness clubs? Fees?

### **Hotel Information**

- 1) How old is the property? When was the last renovation completed and what exactly was done?
- 2) Are any future renovations planned? Will renovations scheduled during or six months following our meeting?
- 3) Are the employees unionized? When does the contract expire and what are the restrictions?
- 4) Is the hotel ADA accessible? How many rooms are fully accessible with roll-in showers, others?
- 5) How many total guest rooms? Non-smoking/smoking?

- 6) Kings? Doubles? Queens? Suites? Concierge Level? Are Concierge and/or floors with suites controlled access floors?
- 7) Any restrictions and/or fees on accepting shipments for GFWC?
- 8) Built in registration area with storage?
- 9) Is signage allowed? Any restrictions on location?
- 10) How many floors? How many elevators? Are they “smart” elevators?

### **Hotel Transportation**

- 1) Distance and drive time from airport?
- 2) Will hotel provide transportation to/from airport and/or other destinations within city?
  - a. Cost of airport transfers for taxis, limousines, charter buses?
- 3) Onsite parking? Discounted for guests? Valet parking? What about for ADA valet parking? In-and-out privileges?

### **Accounting**

- 1) Master account available? Direct billing or pay on departure?
- 2) Credit cards accepted?
- 3) ATM on the premises? Where is nearest one?
- 4) Personal checks accepted?
- 5) What type of guarantee policy for guests? One night deposit? Credit card?
- 6) Complimentary rooms: cumulative or per night? Can it be applied to master account or only sleeping rooms?

### **Emergency and Fire Safety**

- 1) Is there an emergency fire evacuation and procedure plan in place?
- 2) Are all hotel employees and facility staff familiar with the plan?
- 3) Exactly what actions are taken when an alarm sounds?
- 4) Do fire alarms alert the local fire department directly?
- 5) What is the proximity of the fire department and their estimated response time?
- 6) Is there a paging or telephone system that reaches all occupants simultaneously? Is it functioning?
- 7) Are all exits clearly marked in hallways and rooms? Are they visible and well illuminated?
- 8) Do sleeping & meeting rooms, service and exposition areas have sprinklers, smoke detectors PA systems?
- 9) Is there an emergency lighting system in place? Is it on a separate power system?
- 10) Are exit signs lit by the emergency power system?
- 11) In the event of a fire, are elevators automatically locked?

- 12) Do all sleeping and meeting rooms have an emergency evacuation map prominently displayed?
- 13) Are fire extinguishers on each floor? When were they last inspected?
- 14) How often do you conduct fire drills? When was the last one?
- 15) How are individuals with disabilities made aware of emergencies?
- 16) Is a written medical emergency plan in place? When was it last reviewed?
- 17) How are emergency procedures initiated?
- 18) Is staff familiar with the plan?
- 19) Is a first aid station onsite? What are its hours of operation? What is the first aid station equipped with and how is it staffed?
- 20) What are some of the typical medical emergencies the station has handled?
- 21) Is there a doctor on call 24 hours?
- 22) Where is the nearest hospital? What is the name and phone number?
- 23) Are any staff members trained in basic CPR? Are their certifications current?
- 24) Is wait staff trained to perform the Heimlich maneuver?

## EXAMPLE

### *Event Specifications*

The event specifications, commonly referred to as “specs” are created based on the agenda of the meeting and should be submitted with the RFP to prospective venues. The primary purpose is to have all your details clearly outlined and to give the venue an overview of your meeting needs.

The following information should be included in the specs:

- Day and Time
- Name of function
- Food Selection
- Number of Attendees
- Room setup

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Food &amp; Beverage</b>	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Set-up</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	8:00am-12:00pm	Board of Directors Breakfast Meeting	Plated breakfast	175-200	Rounds of 8-10ppl; head table for 8-10ppl on riser
	12:00-5:00pm	Strategic Planning Committee Meeting	Coffee Break	15	Conference
	7:00-9:00pm	Social Gathering	Cash Bar	175-200	High and low rounds scattered; Dance floor in center

## **EXAMPLE**

### *Request for proposal (RFP)*

The purpose of an RFP is to solicit information from a vendor based on the needs of the meeting. The proposal should convey the purpose and vital aspects of the meeting.

The RFP should include:

- Description of the organization
- Meeting dates
- Past meeting sites
- Number of sleeping rooms and type
- Considerations
- Food and beverage
- Meeting space requirement
- Deadline for submitting proposal and contact information
- Additional information

### *Sample RFP*

#### **BACKGROUND**

The General Federation of Women's Clubs is a unifying force, bringing together local women's clubs, with members dedicated to strengthening their communities and enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. With 100,000 members in affiliated clubs in every state and more than a dozen countries, GFWC members are community leaders who work locally to create global change by supporting the arts, preserving natural resources, advancing education, promoting healthy lifestyles, encouraging civic involvement, and working toward world peace and understanding.

The biannual Board of Directors Orientation Meeting is a gathering of 145-165 appointed and elected national, state, and regional leaders from 50 states.

#### **PREFERRED MEETING DATES**

November 30-December 4, 2011

Meetings begin on Thursday, December 1, and end on Saturday, December 3, with an optional offsite event. Major arrivals are on Thursday and Friday, and major departures are on Sunday.

## **PAST MEETING SITES**

2009—Sheraton Crystal City | Arlington, VA  
2007—Marriott Key Bridge | Arlington, VA  
2005—Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel | Washington, DC  
2003—Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel | Washington, DC  
2001—Holiday Inn Old Town Select | Alexandria, VA  
1999—Holiday Inn Old Town Select | Alexandria, VA

## **SLEEPING ROOM AND GROUP ROOM RATE**

Wednesday, November 30	15 rooms
Thursday, December 1	60 rooms
Friday, December 2	85 rooms
Saturday, December 3	73 rooms

Please note that all rooms in the GFWC room block need to have two beds and be non-smoking.

When providing the group rate for this meeting, please include the current (2010) group rate and hotel's current rack rates for all room types (single, double, suites, etc.)

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- One complimentary room for every 40 nights sold on a cumulative basis, including shoulder dates.
- Complimentary two-bedroom suite for the president-elect for arrival on Wednesday, November 30, and departure on Sunday, December 4.
- Complimentary one-bedroom suite for the director-elect of junior clubs for arrival on Wednesday, November 30, and departure on Sunday, December 4
- Three staff rooms at 50 percent off the negotiated group rate for arrival on Wednesday, November 30, and departure on Sunday, December 4.
- Discount on in-house audiovisual services.
- Complimentary wireless internet access in guest rooms and meeting space.

## **FOOD AND BEVERAGE**

As noted on the attached specifications, we will have a number of meal functions on the property. There may be additional receptions and/or continental breakfasts dispersed throughout the duration of the meeting.

Please enclose a complete set of menus and food and beverage policies with your proposal. Please include the current (2010) minimum and maximum food and beverage prices with the menus.

## **MEETING SPACE REQUIREMENTS**

Preliminary meeting specifications accompany this RFP. In general, GFWC will require the following meeting space:

- **Business Meetings:** A ballroom which can accommodate at least 165 people classroom style with a head table for eight on a riser (we would prefer to have this room on a 24 hour hold).
- **Meal Functions:** A ballroom which can accommodate at least 165 people banquet style with a head table for eight on a riser.
- **Breakouts:** See the enclosed specs for a specific breakdown regarding event timing and needs. We will consider utilizing meeting space in the complimentary suites as breakout rooms, as well as combining a limited number of group meetings into larger meeting space.
- One room appropriate for a staff office/storage, available on a 24hr hold.
- A highly visible and accessible registration area, near GFWC's meeting rooms.

Please include suggested meeting room assignments based on the enclosed preliminary meeting agenda.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **Business Center**
  - Please indicate whether or not your property has an in-house business center, and if so, what services are provided there as well as its days and hours of operation.
- **Audiovisual Services**
  - Please provide information on your audiovisual services and specifically:
    - Which services are provided at no charge (easels, podiums, microphones, etc.)
    - Which meeting rooms, if not all, are directly and permanently wired into the house sound system
    - We request a 25 percent discount off the published rate for audiovisual services and/or products
    - Please provide information on your in-house and/or preferred audiovisual company
- **Renovations**
  - Describe any renovations scheduled for the next year and renovations that have been completed in the last two years in meeting space, common areas, and guest rooms.
- **Transportation**
  - Please provide information on transportation, and specifically:

- Distance in both miles and number of minutes from Washington, D.C. airports to the property
- Cost and availability of modes of transportation between the airports and hotel
- Complimentary travel services available
- Availability and cost of on-site parking for guests and any discounts

### **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Please e-mail your proposal and accompanying materials by January 14, 2011 to:

Hafeezah Abdullah | Convention and Meetings Coordinator

[HAbdullah@GFWC.org](mailto:HAbdullah@GFWC.org)

## GLOSSARY OF MEETING TERMS

**Air Wall.** Movable wall or barrier dividing a large meeting room into two or more smaller rooms. These walls are not usually soundproof. A soundproof solution is to run two parallel air walls to create a narrow corridor between them.

**All-space Hold.** Function and meeting space held at a hotel for the exclusive use of a group.

**Ambient Light.** Natural or unavoidable light. In audiovisual terms, refers to light seeping into dark rooms from windows and doors.

**Banquet Check.** Itemized statement of food and services provided at an event, including taxes and gratuity.

**Banquet Event Order.** Detailed instructions for a particular event, including time and location of event, room set-up, menu selections, audiovisual needs and other meeting logistics. Also known as an Event Order.

**Breakout Session.** When the plenary meeting breaks out into smaller groups.

**Budget.** Statement of objectives and limitations for a meeting or event.

**CMP.** Certified Meeting Professional. Designates individuals who have taken the Certified Meeting Professional exam administered by the Convention Liaison Council.

**Convention Services.** Department within hotel or CVB that is responsible for all meetings and conventions held on-site or in a city. Convention services staff work with clients in the final planning stages on room set-ups, audiovisual needs, meal functions and other meeting logistics.

**Convention and Visitors Bureau.** Not-for-profit umbrella organizations that represent a specific city or destination. Most are membership organizations that are funded by membership dues, government funding and a percentage of local hotel taxes. A CVB specializes in bringing together area businesses that depend on travel, tourism and the meetings market. *Also called Convention and Visitors Association or CVA*

**Destination Management Company.** Also known as a DMC, a company that coordinates meetings, tours, offsite venues, entertainment, transportation, decorations and special events.

**Event Order.** See Banquet Event Order.

**Gratuity.** An amount of money charged on costs for services. Typically charged as a percentage of meal or audiovisual prices. May or may not be taxable.

**Group Rate.** Discounted rate negotiated by the group for any rooms reserved under the group's Room Block.

**Guarantee.** Specific number to which the client commits to pay, such as the number of meals group will be charged.

**Honorarium.** Fee paid to individual for speaker services.

**Incidentals.** Items like laundry, minibars, room service, and in-room movies charged to a guest's hotel bill. These are usually paid by the individual.

**IPO.** Individual pays own. Used for non-master account meetings or meeting where charges are divided among master account and individuals.

**Lectern.** A stand upon which a speaker may rest notes or books; placed on a table.

**Master Account.** An account set up by the group to pay for all meeting related charges, such as audiovisual, food and beverage, room and tax.

**Master Bill.** A consolidated statement of all charges incurred by the group under the Master Account.

**Overhead.** Expenses incurred as the normal part of doing business (*i.e.* salaries, rent etc.).

**Plenary Session.** Meetings with all attendees present in one room at the same time. Also may be called a General Session.

**Plus-Plus (++)**. In meetings, refers to the addition of tax and gratuity to the price quoted for goods and services.

**Podium.** A stand upon which a speaker may rest notes or books; placed on the floor; standing.

**Rack Rate.** A hotel's published room rates, always higher than group rates.

**Request for Proposal.** An outline of the proposed event which includes many meeting details, including description of your group and meeting; preferred and alternate meeting dates; guest room requirements; requests for additional considerations; food and beverage needs or budget; meeting specifications.

**Resume.** A document that states all of the details relating to a meeting.

**Revenue.** Money received in payment for goods and services that have been or will be provided.

**Room Block.** Number and type of rooms by date that the hotel is holding for the group over the event dates at the Group Rate.

**Service Charge.** In meetings, refers to the amount charged for costs of services. May be taxable. Also known as “Gratuity.”

**Tip.** Voluntary gift from the meeting planner or guest to the supplier staff that has provided exceptional service.

**Walk.** Hotel term used to refer to the displacement of guests. When a guest with a confirmed reservation is either turned away or “walked” to another hotel because of overbooking or because expected guest departures did not occur as planned.