

A group of diverse professionals in a meeting, smiling and clapping. The image is a collage of several photos showing people in business attire. In the foreground, a man in a light blue shirt is clapping and smiling broadly. Behind him, a woman with curly hair is also smiling and clapping. To the right, a man in a dark suit is smiling. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting a large conference room or auditorium.

PRSSA

2021–2022

District Conference Information Handbook

A comprehensive overview of applying, planning and executing

Dear PRSSA Member,



Hello!

I'm so excited that you're reading this, because it means you're considering hosting a District Conference in the Spring of 2022. District Conferences are an incredible opportunity to help your Chapter with professional development, recruitment, fundraising and fostering meaningful connections. They're also at the forefront of PRSSA brand exposure, member recruitment and overall advancement of the Society.

In addition to being rewarding and exciting, hosting a District Conference is a large commitment. There are many details you have to consider when planning your event, but you won't have to take this on by yourself. You have endless resources available to guide you, and you'll be able to connect with other Conference coordinators to brainstorm ideas and ask questions. Reviewing this handbook is critical, but it's also important that you consult previous Conference coordinators and seriously evaluate the exciting, but demanding, work ahead of you if you decide to host a Conference. Let this handbook serve as a reference for how to apply for, plan and execute your conference.

When planning your conference, consider what makes a great event experience to you. Let your past experiences with PRSSA and PRSA events guide you, but don't forget to feature what makes your Chapter unique and make the conference your own.

Your Chapter has something special to offer the rest of the Society, and District Conferences can be a great way to show off your Chapters' connections, talents and unique qualities. I am so excited to hear how you're going to execute the best conference possible.

Please reach out and let me know how I can best serve your Chapter. Whether it's District Conference ideas, events, fundraising, sponsorships or simple advice, I am here for you and thrilled to have the opportunity to get to know you.

I'm looking forward working with you.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erin Lewis'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erin Lewis

2021-2022 Vice President of Events and Fundraising

vpevents@prsa.org

District Conference Overview

District Conferences are mini-Conferences held by Chapters during the spring semester. A traditional District Conference is one to three days in length and consists of educational sessions, networking events and socials. Planned, staffed and hosted by Chapter members, a District Conference offers valuable experience in event planning, sponsorship, fundraising and promotion. Even further, District Conferences can provide unique opportunities for Chapter members to broaden their network and strengthen relationships among local PRSSA and PRSA Chapters.

Benefits of Hosting

National Recognition

In addition to the selected Conferences and host Chapters receiving recognition at International Conference, PRSSA Headquarters promotes District Conferences through its various national channels. District Conference committees will be encouraged to submit digital promotional content in several stages for recognition on PRSSA National social media channels.

Dr. F. H. Teahan Award for Outstanding District Conference

Chapters hosting a District Conference are eligible to apply for the Teahan award, which consists of a prize of \$300 and a plaque for your Chapter.

Star Chapter Award

Chapters of any size can apply for this award by meeting specific Chapter and professional development goals, one of which is hosting or attending a District Conference.

Chapter Fundraising

If budgeting is completed correctly and sponsorship goals are met, Chapters will see a profit from hosting a District Conference. When beginning the planning process, draft out a projected expense sheet to identify sponsorship needs and a reasonable ticket price that will allow for your Chapter's total revenue to exceed expenses.

Membership Recruitment

Hosting and promoting a District Conference is an easy way to showcase the benefits of being a PRSSA member to those on your campus and in the surrounding region. With your planning team, consider how you can take advantage of the opportunity to promote PRSSA membership, the affiliate member program and the transition from PRSSA to PRSA.

Expectations for Hosting Chapters

ICON 2021

The coordinator, or another committee member, should register for ICON 2021 and help promote the Conference for the spring.

Communication

The Vice President of Events and Fundraising must receive regular updates from coordinators in a timely, professional manner before and after the conference. District Conference coordinators should plan to talk to the Vice President of Events and Fundraising according to a schedule set once confirmed conferences are released. Conference coordinators will work with the Vice President of Events and Fundraising on developing a conference specific timeline for check-ins, and they can expect the Vice President of Events and Fundraising to respond to them within a timely manner, too. Additionally, all coordinators will be placed into a GroupMe. This is a great opportunity to get to know other coordinators, bounce ideas off of people in your same position and really take advantage of all the professional development opportunities that hosting a Conference has to offer.

Financial Resources

Chapters who apply need to consider that Conference costs can amount to thousands of dollars due to venue fees, hotel contracts, etc. This is why sponsorship is a crucial part of all District Conference plans. However, all applying Chapters should have the financial means to cover their estimated costs in case sponsorship goals are not reached. PRSSA National does not help cover the costs incurred from District Conferences.

National Committee Member

One National Committee member will be assigned to each District Conference to support the hosting Chapter. It is the host Chapter's responsibility to plan and budget the hotel accommodations, registration and transportation of their Committee guest for the full duration of their Conference. No food is expected to be covered with the exception of any food covered by registration costs. Additionally, hotel accommodations must start, at the latest, the night prior to the conference and extend, at the earliest, until the last day of conference scheduling. Accommodation plans must be approved as adequate by the Vice President of Events and Fundraising. PRSSA National will cover the cost of the individual's travel. Your event schedule should include one hour of programming for the National Committee member to present an update and workshop on behalf of the Society. The assigned National Committee member will also provide a report and reflection on the conference following the event.

Committee Commitment Capacity

Planning a sizable event like a District Conference is a huge time commitment. If committees who interview appear to have a number of other time commitments (internships, large course loads, study abroad), this is considered a risky committee structure. Committees should budget to spend some time each week working on District Conference projects. District Conference planning starts in October and is on-going until events are executed in February–April. Please consider your commitments during this time frame.

District Conference Interest Form

Interested Chapters should complete the District Conference Interest Form by Aug. 13 at 2 p.m. EST. This form serves as a way to connect with the Vice President of Events and Fundraising and ask questions about the application and hosting process. The Interest Form is not binding, and Chapters must fill out the District Conference Hosting Application in order to be selected to host a Conference in spring 2022.

District Conference Hosting Application

Once your Chapter has decided it wants to host a District Conference, it must fill out the District Conference Hosting Application. This binding form will go live on August 16, and it is due Sept. 3 at 2 p.m. EST. Selected Chapters must host a Conference.

Complete the Application and submit it via email to:

Vice President of Events and Fundraising

Erin Lewis | vpevents@prsa.org

PRSSA National President

Rachel Meltzer | nationalpresident@prsa.org

PRSA Senior Vice President of Programming

Jeneen Garcia | jeneen.garcia@prsa.org | (212) 460-1466

PRSSA District

To provide adequate opportunities for members across the country, PRSSA District Conferences will align with the District guidelines set by PRSA. Only one conference will be hosted per District and not all Districts will have a conference.

Interviews

After submitting the interest form, prospective District Conference coordinators will complete a phone interview with the vice president of events and fundraising. Interview questions will assess the Chapter's ability to host a successful District Conference and will provide an opportunity for Chapters to explain and sell their unique plans. It will last 15 to 20 minutes and the coordinator is required to participate. Additional planning committee members may join. Questions will be sent prior to interview.

Selection

Chapters will be notified of the final selection prior to the PRSSA 2021 International Conference. At least one member of the selected District Conference committee (preferably the coordinator) is encouraged to attend International Conference to connect with the National Committee and begin promoting the District Conference to the Society. Chapters are selected on assessment of ability to host, preparedness for interview and articulation of unique event plans. All Conference formats (in person, virtual and hybrid) will be considered equally.

Overview of Commitment

This broad, vague overview of the planning and execution timeline for a District Conference provides a look at all the components that can be apart of the process.

Six months prior

- Announce event.
- Begin work on logo, branding, theme and budget.
- Secure venue. Launch website and social media profiles.

Three months prior

- Finalize registration fee, process and cancellation policy.
- Confirm keynote speaker, special guests and session presenters.
- Create communications timeline, begin design, get printing estimates.
- Finalize budget.
- Invite high school students or finalize high school outreach session.
- Distribute fliers on campus.
- Seek potential sponsors.

Two months prior

- Visit classes and other Chapters' meetings to promote event. Recruit volunteers.
- Create program. Confirm caterings.
- Hold Chapter fundraisers. Confirm session presenters.

One month prior

- Send registration reminder and message to speakers, vendors and sponsors.
- Print event program.
- Close event registration
- Purchase banners, bags, decorations, nametags and any other Conference materials.

Two weeks prior

- Reconfirm everything including keynote speaker.
- Ensure guests have directions, hotel reservations and parking passes.
- Create individual run of shows for committee members, speakers and VIPs.

On-site

- Assist speakers and attendees as much as possible.
- Distribute and gather satisfaction surveys for each session.

After

- Compile materials for Outstanding District Conference Teahan Award.
- Send thank you notes to speakers, sponsors, etc.
- Distribute the electronic evaluation survey.
- Thank committee members and volunteers.
- Complete summary report and send to the Vice President of Events and Fundraising.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding District Conferences,
please reach out:

Vice President of Events and Fundraising

Erin Lewis

vpevents@prsa.org

PRSSA

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