



Regional Networks: Annual Meeting Planning

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Presentation Purpose and Contents

This presentation is to the
Regional Networks Coordinating
Committee, on March 4th, 2016.

It's purpose is to present the best
practice for planning and
coordinating a network annual
meeting, including:

- What the practice is and looks like
- Why the practice is worthwhile
- Who should do it and when
- How to do it, with examples

Partner Networks	Network Participants	Representing
Green Cities California (GCC)	Linda Giannelli Pratt Erik Pearson Shannon Parry ALTERNATE- Susana Reyes	GCC Managing Director (Coordinator) Hayward, CA Santa Monica, CA Los Angeles, CA
Great Lakes	Matt Naud Matt Gray	Ann Arbor, MI Cleveland, OH
Heartland	T.O. Bowman Brenda Nations	Oklahoma City, OK Iowa City, IO
Michigan Green Communities (MGC)	Dave Norwood Sandra Diorka Jaime Kidwell-Brix	Dearborn, MI Delhi, MI MGC Coordinator (Coordinator)
New England Municipal Sustainability Network (NEMSN)	Troy Moon Cyndi Veit Kelsey O'Neil Virginia LeClair	Portland, ME EPA- (Coordinator) EPA- (Coordinator) Dedham, MA
Ohio, Kansas, Indiana (OKI)	Larry Faulkin Lamees Mubaslat	Cincinnati, OH Montgomery County, OH
Prairie State Network (PSN)	Catherine Hurley Dan Hughes	Evanston, IL PSN Coordinator (Coordinator)
Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN)	Peter Nierengarten Robin Cox Meg Williams-Jamison	Fayetteville, AR Huntsville, AL SSDN Coordinator
Western Adaptation Alliance (WAA)	Tamara Lawless Ashley Perl	Flagstaff, AZ Aspen, CO

What Are Some Guidelines for Annual Meeting Planning?

- A network's annual meeting: a time for members to connect with other members in order to
 - Develop and strengthen relationships;
 - Engage in peer-to-peer learning;
 - Obtain field-building progress updates; and
 - Recruit members to serve in leadership and collaboration roles after the meeting.
- Resource: *Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact* contains guidelines for a network to develop and host a successful annual meeting:
 1. Guiding Concepts
 2. Agenda Development
 3. Planning Guidance
 4. Assessment and Improvement



Guiding Concepts



Important factors to consider no matter the size and stage of development of your network (revisit regularly to ensure a highly effective annual meeting):

1. Determine the meeting goals early and compare to meeting development often.
2. Make increasing connectivity an explicit objective of the meeting.
3. Make enough time during the meeting for members to connect, not just work together.
4. Promote what members are doing and what they know; don't over-rely on outside experts.

Agenda Development

Keep these concepts in mind while developing your meeting agenda. These insights will help you build a productive and dynamic itinerary:

- Balance informal and formal networking times.
- For larger groups, include time for everyone to learn together, and times for smaller breakouts.
- If possible, include open space times (scheduled time blocks without programmed content); these spaces allow you to respond to topics that emerge at the meeting.
- Build in time for network planning and surveying on next steps.
- Provide an update on the current state of the Network.
- Develop a core team (3-5 members) to guide strategy, such as meeting goals, and agenda.
- Survey the membership for their current priorities, and ask who is willing to teach on which topic area.



Planning Guidance

Planning an annual meeting can seem like a daunting task. But with solid organization and clear communication, this process can be easy.



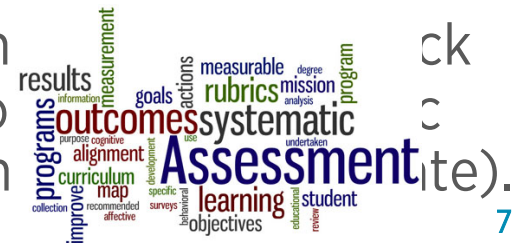
The following tips can help to create a clear division of labor and streamline the event development process:

- Start 6 months in advance with a host city or county.
- Assign 2 people to be over the budget to avoid calculation errors; one is point, the other checks.
- Meet bi-weekly with the Annual Meeting Planning Committee. Send out call agendas in advance and use their time to troubleshoot at a high level.
- Build a shared task list so the team knows exactly who is

Assessment and Improvement

A network's annual meeting gives members an opportunity to build relationships and share ideas.

- Collecting feedback from participants about their experience and suggestions for future events is valuable for the success of future events.
- The following tips will help you get the right information from members:
 - Distribute and collect evaluations before the meeting adjourns, and make evaluation collection simple for participants.
 - Make sure evaluations help you understand how much connecting happened in addition to other evaluation goals.
 - Use different ways of collecting information in boxes with specific answers, rating systems to topics, and fill in the blank sections were mem

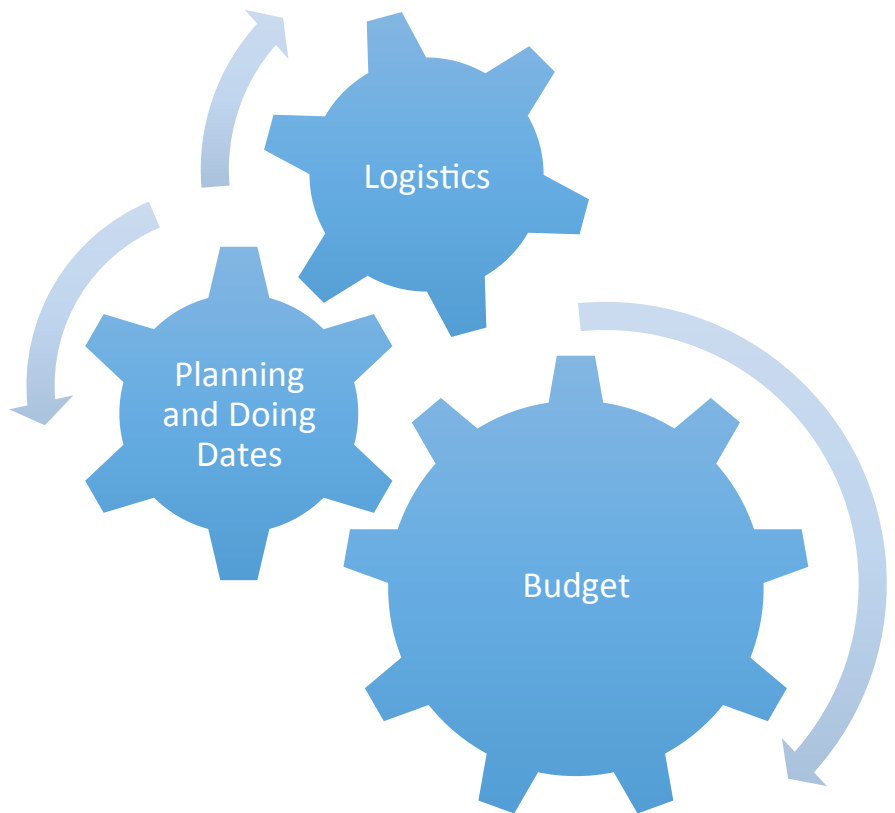


Why is Planning for Annual Meeting so Important?

It reduces pain: Many gears need to mesh to make it run smoothly. Someone needs to be in charge, and the team needs to be very clear on roles and deadlines.

Planning gives you an idea of what to expect and pathways for troubleshooting.

If participants don't feel



Annual Meeting Logistics

Good logistics coordination defines clear roles and expectations of teammates. Capitalize on individual strengths.



- Designate staff or 2 network point people to handle logistics, such as booking a block of rooms, arranging transit from the airport to the hotel / meeting location, and dealing with food.
- Send a logistics packet for travelers in advance, which contains:
 - Transportation instructions (airport, transit, etc.)
 - Hotel location / map of the event (meeting, dinner, tour locations)
 - Parking / building access instructions
 - Meeting Agenda
 - Participant list (so members can stay connected after the meeting)

Who is Responsible for Planning the Annual Meeting?

- Discuss team selection process and sizing based on network topography: ask for skill sets and assign based on them.
- What types of skills will be most useful?
 - Who has an eye for details?
 - Who is good at planning?
 - Who is good at design and strategic thinking?
 - Who has capacity (staff that can help, like assistants, interns, etc.)?
 - Who wants to host? What are their resources (like free meeting space)?
- Organizing workflow and setting up committees:
 - Calendar everything: reoccurring meeting dates, deadlines, etc.



How To Go About Planning for an Annual Meeting?

Strategy Bucket:

- Planning Committee
 - Timeline
 - Pre-event member surveys
 - Agenda Development
- Speaker/Presentation selection and confirmation
- Post event survey



Logistics Bucket:

- Logistics of location and event
 - Food
 - Travel
 - Lodging
 - Event Space
 - Event Transportation
 - Vendor Payments
- Meeting Packet
- Attendance confirmation
- Travel Reimbursements



Discussion



1. What does the network need most right now (for example: to connect, to focus on content, to collaborate, to strengthen leadership)?
2. What are the meeting goals?
3. Who is best suited to handle the meeting event planning details, and how can this responsibility be shared?
4. What dates, location, financial model, and agenda make the most sense for my network, given where they are in maturation (emerging, developing, mature)?
5. How will you find out what are the primary topics of interest, and the member expectations are?



Discussion



5. What should the State of Our Network presentation address (annual work plan update, member survey data, etc.)?
6. What specific activities in the agenda will build and strengthen relationships between members (ice breakers, evening reception activities, meeting buddies, etc.)?
7. How should the sessions structured to support the meeting goals (for example: PowerPoint presentations, breakout conversations, field trips, etc.)?
8. What should the Post Meeting Evaluation Survey contain?

A background graphic of a network diagram with blue circular nodes of varying sizes connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web.

Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

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Appendix

1. **Example Annual Meeting Agenda**
2. **Example Annual Meeting Evaluation**
3. **Example Annual Meeting Networking Strategy**

Example Annual Meeting Agenda



Green Cities CALIFORNIA
Accelerating the adoption of sustainability policies and practices

June 2015 Annual Meeting Agenda

June 15th-

- 4:00PM Welcome and Introductions with brief highlights from each member
- 5:00PM Overview of Sustainability Initiatives from the Host City- (Billi, Timothy and Neal)
- 6:00 PM US Conference of Mayors Annual Conference and Pre-Meeting with the City of San Francisco
- 6:45 PM Dinner

June 16th-

- Breakfast
- 9:00AM
 - Overview of GCC Organizational Structure and Annual Work Plan
 - Integration into the model for a USDN Regional Network
 - GCC Priorities
 - Working Groups
 - Budget
 - Qualifications for Membership
 - Operational Issues
 - Protocol for grants
 - Website/ member participation
 - 1.) Develop 501 (c) (3) (Working Group)

Example Annual Meeting Evaluation

SSDN Annual Meeting Evaluation – November 2014

Name: _____

- Please react to this statement: Overall, the meeting was well worth my time.
- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree
- How many SSDN members do you feel will respond quickly if you contact them for information & advice? _____. Is this more than before the meeting? Yes ☐ No ☐
- How many members do you plan to follow up with after the meeting for deeper exchange /collaboration? _____
- Did you learn about SSDN activities/workgroups that you joined/are likely to join or start? Yes ☐ No ☐ If so, how many _____, which one(s) _____
- How many ideas and practices are you taking back to your city/county? _____ Will you continue exchanges with other SSDN members? Yes ☐ No ☐ If not, why not? _____
- Rate the following activities of the meeting in terms of their usefulness to you.

3 = EXTREMELY Useful 2 = Somewhat Useful 1 = NOT Useful

Activity	Score 1-3	Comment
PRE-MEETING: Tour		Tour:
WEDNESDAY: Plenary- Sustainability Funding		
WEDNESDAY: Breakout Session I		Topic:
WEDNESDAY: Lunch Presentation- Solar and EV		
WEDNESDAY: Panel- Community Engagement		
WEDNESDAY: Breakout Session II		Topic:
THURSDAY: Adaptation Presentations		
THURSDAY: State of the Network		
THURSDAY: Call for Leadership		
ALL DAYS: Unstructured Time (breaks, meals)		

- Rate the amount of unstructured time during the meeting: Not enough ☐ Just right ☐ Too much ☐
- Rate the amount of substantive learning of the meeting: Not enough ☐ Just right ☐ Too much ☐
- Rate the length of the meeting: Too short ☐ Just right ☐ Too long ☐
- What is the most significant learning, information, or insight that you took away from the annual meeting?
- How could the meeting have been improved to increase your satisfaction?
- What was the low point of the meeting for you?
- What was the highlight of the meeting for you?

Example Annual Meeting Networking Strategy

SSDN Annual Meeting Buddies

The buddy system is in place to help integrate new members with veteran members. The following directions are sent to veteran members a week before the meeting:

1. On day 1 seek out your Buddy and introduce yourself, welcome them to the network and share your highlights and experience from past meetings.
2. Find time during the meeting to catch a few minutes together. Offer to be a resource to them during the meeting (answer any questions about how to plug in or anything else).
3. Throughout the meeting, if you see your buddy milling around alone, introduce them to someone nearby and help start a conversation.

It isn't a major commitment, but it does make a big difference to new members experiencing SSDN in person for the first time.

NEW MEMBER BUDDY

- Member X

VETERAN MEMBER BUDDY

- Member Y