

Wireless Institute of Australia

Guidelines for Hosting a

WIA Annual Conference Weekend

August 2012

Introduction

These Guidelines are to help Affiliated Clubs and groups of clubs to understand what is required to host a WIA Annual Conference weekend and the planning, organisation and running of the Conference. The “Host Club” (which may be a group of clubs) will work in close collaboration with the WIA National Office.

Please note that the points following are guidelines and suggestions only. These Guidelines, procedures and suggestions are for the assistance of the Conference organisers to help to minimise difficulties and ensure a successful event.

It is very helpful if some members of the Host Club and its organizing committee have attended a previous WIA Annual Conference and observed its organization and methods of working.

Location and Host Club

The location of the Conference is ideally a place other than a State capital city that has sufficient local interest to ensure an interesting weekend for the participants and their partners.

The duties expected of the Host Club are not onerous. However in those cases where the Host Club has many members, the Host Club may choose to organize extra activities for visitors to their region.

Application to Host Conference

In making a formal application wishing to host an Annual Conference Weekend affiliated Clubs will need to address a number of key points. An application form is attached at the end of this Guide.

Preliminary information needs to be supplied about the Host Club and their particular town or location. The facilities available, access and distance from the nearest airport, and the means of transport (railway, bus/coach, taxi etc) from the airport to the Conference site should be outlined.

Other details about the venue proposed, the accommodation, budgetary costs, and other information as described in the following sections should also be provided.

The application is made to the WIA Board of Directors for consideration at their meeting prior to the current year's Conference. The WIA Board of Directors shall consider each written submission.

Having accepted an application, the WIA Board of Directors shall then determine the date for the next Conference in consultation with the chosen Host Club. Before the date is chosen, it is necessary to find out what other major events could be held at the proposed venue, to avoid clashes that could restrict accommodation and other facilities.

The venue and Host Club of the next Annual Conference Weekend will be announced at the Annual Dinner.

Objectives and Requirements

1. The prime purpose of the Annual Conference Weekend is the staging of the WIA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Open Forum.
2. Fellowship and understanding between radio amateurs is developed and fostered.
3. The Annual Conference Weekend allows for reports from Coordinators to be presented and for members to consider policy, operational and technical matters and to express their views on any matter.

Organisation

While the precise structure of the Host Club's group to manage the Conference is really a matter for the club involved, it has been found that a small group, headed by one overall leader works best. The club's steering group should not be too large with other individuals appointed for particular tasks.

The leader of the group, the chair, should be the basic point of contact. Usually a local WIA Director, if there is one, will be involved and the WIA side will include the WIA Manager, and may include one or more of the WIA President, WIA Secretary and WIA Treasurer.

It is most important that everyone directly involved are kept fully informed and the clubs steering group and the WIA Manager and other WIA officers are copied with all emails relating to the Conference.

It is also important that where a response is required to an email, the response should be provided quickly.

The Clubs Conference Committee works with the WIA office to organize the venue and facilities, arrange the meals, catering, transport and support the Partners' Tour. In most instances the venue will be a hotel, which will be responsible for the detailed arrangements and the actual work. **Note that all contracts are to be between the WIA National Office and the Vendor/Service Provider.**

Timetable and Events

1. The scheduling of the WIA Annual Conference Weekend is restricted by the fact that it is also our Annual General Meeting, and we need to hold that within five months from the end of our financial year. Our financial year ends on 31 December, and then we have to have an audit completed, reports written and printed and circulated with *Amateur Radio* magazine.
2. The event is usually held over three days, commencing on a Friday evening and finishing on Sunday.
3. The WIA Board of Directors meets at some time during or after the Conference Weekend.
4. The basic program is Registration is available on Friday afternoon, Friday evening a dinner or other function, Saturday morning AGM followed immediately by the Open Forum, Saturday afternoon, a technical symposium or other event, Saturday evening, the WIA Annual Dinner, and Sunday another event sometimes taking advantage of a local tourist attraction or feature.

The Partners Tour is conducted during Saturday

5. Most people attending will also have arrived by Friday afternoon and will be looking to complete their Registration and pick up name tags and information etc. Space or a venue is needed for this and the associated social activity.
6. The Friday night social function is the first official item of the Conference. A guest speaker is often invited to address participants.
7. A Partners Tour is also to be organized (a sub-committee of local YLs and XYLs can be formed for this activity). Possible activities include tourist attractions nearby in the city, local handcrafts, garden visits, art shows, shopping at local speciality and general stores and markets etc.
Costings must be provided for all venues proposed in the Partner's Tour (entry fees, tours, food, beverages etc). These costs are budgeted for in the Partner's registration fee.
8. A closing date for registrations for some events may be considered if physical constraints mean numbers must be limited.
9. Depending on the timetable, a Club event can be scheduled on Sunday afternoon or evening, if desired.

Financial Arrangements

WIA and Participants

1. The WIA is responsible for the Conference and pays all costs and expenses for the Conference meeting room(s), venue, equipment hire, transport etc.
2. The Host Club is not expected to meet any financial commitments specifically for running the Conference, except for any functions or events it may choose to schedule.
3. All participants and their partners are responsible for all their own costs – travel, accommodation, meals etc.
4. It may be possible for the WIA to negotiate with the hotel (if this is the venue) for discounted costs for the Conference meeting rooms, if a majority of participants stay at that hotel.
5. The choice of a reasonably priced Conference facility and accommodation is important. A medium priced hotel is usually adequate.
6. Some smaller and less expensive hotels or motels should also be sought nearby (within walking distance) for participants with limited budgets. Many participants travel to destinations with their own campervan or caravan, so appropriate nearby Parks should also be identified.
7. Having breakfast included in the daily tariff is often a good “bonus” for those attending.
8. Make sure that the price obtained is a price per room, not a price per person. That makes it economic for a couple to share a room, particularly if breakfast for two is included in the price.

The Venue and Facilities

1. It is important to ensure that the physical arrangements for the Conference are adequate. As far as practical this is done by working in association with the Host Club, and with their assistance.
2. We endeavour to book the venue well in advance.
3. Keep checking the bookings for the venue, accommodation, transport etc. regularly. Get re-confirmations in writing.
4. Confirm in writing all "understandings" relating to arrangements at the venue and any special provisions and arrangements with any other suppliers. Do not rely on verbal agreements.
5. The size of the venue required depends on the number of people attending. Typically 150 – 200 participants will attend, plus the WIA Directors, Secretary, Treasurer and staff. Some spouses and partners also come.
6. It is preferable to have the Conference facilities and accommodation at the one location. A medium sized and priced hotel is usually satisfactory. If the meetings are to be held in a separate Conference centre, the distance from and the transportation to the recommended hotel(s) must be advised.
7. A small meeting room is needed during or following the Conference for the Directors Meeting.
8. Check the Conference room acoustics. We may need a Public Address (PA) / sound system for the opening speeches and for the President and Board at the “top table”. At least two fixed microphones are usually required. Fixed or roving wireless microphones will be needed. The evening receptions probably need PA systems – check what will be needed.
9. Signs at the venue to guide people around may be needed.

Meals and Catering

1. The catering and meals are significant costs considerations.
2. A venue with on-site catering saves a lot of work and problems. Using a hotel as the Conference venue, and for accommodation usually solves this problem. A “package deal” can often be negotiated and result in lower costs overall.

3. It has been found that buffets offer greater variety and are better value for money than two dishes served alternately.
4. Check out the caterers if they are from a separate organization. Use commercial caterers unless your Host Club has the number of capable people used to catering for large numbers who you can really rely on to do the necessary work.
5. Remember, if the food is not of good quality and quantity it will be hard to make the rest of the Conference a success.
6. Menu planning for any evening receptions is important.
7. Morning and afternoon tea is required on Saturday. Lunch can be kept simple, and is included in the price of registration.
8. Make sure the hotel understands the need for fast service at tea breaks and lunch on the Saturday. Have more than one serving-station at coffee breaks and meal times to avoid long queues and to keep delays to a minimum. Space is needed for this.

Accommodation

As noted earlier, the choice of reasonably priced accommodation is important, in the medium price range. Some smaller and less expensive hotels or motels should also be sought near the main venue (within walking distance) for those with limited budgets. To ensure maximum patronage of the host venue, we will only promote one alternative (cheaper) hotel and one Caravan Park.

Accommodation can be managed in a number of different ways, the two most common being:

1. The WIA accepts the accommodation requests along with registrations. Based on requests and information supplied the WIA makes bookings and handles deposits as required. Availability and bookings are confirmed to each Conference attendee. This is very time-consuming, but allows us some control over the whole process.
- Or,
2. Information is provided to participants on the preferred Conference venue, and other recommended accommodation, with indicative pricing and their contact details. The participants then make their own arrangements. This approach requires the least effort on the part of the WIA. Full discounts may not be realized with the Conference hotel.

Remember that some accommodation is required for the WIA Directors, Secretary, Treasurer and staff in the 2 – 3 days before the Conference and for 1 –2 days after the Conference.

Guests

1. The Host Club in consultation with the WIA may invite official guests, (eg. to officially open the Conference on Friday evening or more appropriately, to the Annual Dinner) and local city dignitaries. Be careful to ensure that only appropriate guests are invited. Each one will be a charge on the Conference.
2. Keep the WIA informed of any guests and their spouses, so that they can be greeted and acknowledged, and included in the opening ceremony etc.

Transport

1. It is essential to have a single Transport Coordinator.
2. Identify site specific issues, such as the likely ratio of fly-in to local participants and those staying in caravan parks.
3. It is most helpful to arrange to meet participants on arrival at the airport and provide transportation to the Conference hotel. Many will have travelled for a significant distance and time, and it may be their first visit to your location.
4. Otherwise, provide information in advance on transport from the airport to the city and venue. Budgetary costs and travel times, alternative methods of transport etc. need to be advised. Sometimes the hotel or the airport will provide a shuttle bus/coach service.

5. Check if transport is also needed for departures.
6. Coaches or buses will usually be needed for the day tour of the Partner Tour.
7. However, a small hired bus has been found very helpful and, if appropriate, the WIA will support the hire. It is essential that the WIA is consulted before such a vehicle is hired and the amount of excess is determined. Generally speaking, the cost of additional insurance to reduce the excess to a nominal amount is required. Careful inspection on pick-up is also essential.

Registrations

1. The WIA is responsible for collection all Conference registrations.
2. A data base/register will be set up to record and track registrations. Every registered person will be allocated a number.
3. Each registration will be acknowledged to confirm receipt.
4. All registered participants will be issued with a name tag to show: NAME, CALLSIGN (if applicable) and the functions for which they are registered. These tags will be easy to read, assisting with security at the venue.

Publicity

1. Publicising the WIA Annual Conference Weekend can create a good impression for amateur radio in general and the Host Club locally. A Publicity Coordinator should be appointed to ensure a consistent message is issued and that all opportunities for promotion are taken.
2. Consideration should be given to all local media, using the WIA media kit. The Host Club can gain valuable publicity from this event. Arrangements for the local press, radio and TV services to cover the Conference may be possible. The Chairman of the Conference Committee needs to be responsible and lead this.
3. Informative articles about the venue and location can be prepared for *Amateur Radio Magazine* in the months leading up to the Conference. Copy must be with the Editor well before each monthly close-off date. Likewise, the Weekly WIA News Broadcast should be utilised.
4. A destination-specific satchel may be given to all participants. The contents will be decided upon by the WIA in consultation with the Conference Committee. Local tourist bureaus, manufacturers or service companies may be sources of input. Use the bags to hold any handouts, including the "Open Forum Reports" and the "Program and Information Guide" and any local tourism and publicity brochures, maps of the venue and local area.
5. WIA website to be updated regularly.

Program & Information Guide

A theme for the Saturday afternoon Symposium will be established after discussion with the Host Club. Following this, all presentations must be finalised through the WIA office.

The WIA will produce a "**Program and Information Guide**" for Conference participants.

The content of the Guide will be a collaborative effort between the Host Club and the WIA office.

Some of the information required includes;

- 1) Information about host destination, including local historical information, local features, shopping, food and events (Festivals, carnivals etc)
- 2) Visitors Centre
- 3) Timezone

- 4) Weather
- 5) Conference venue details – location, phone numbers, directions etc
- 6) Local area map
- 7) Conference setup (eg location of information/registration table)
- 8) Contact numbers – event venues, organizers and WIA directors
- 9) Local Amateur Repeater Information
- 10) Function venue details
- 11) Host Club information

It will also provide the Weekend Program – a timetable of each event, marshalling points etc.

Communication

Communication between the organizing committee and the WIA office is vital. A group email list should be established and all correspondence between its members should CC the whole group.

Some Other Items

1. Talk-in Radio using a Club Call and a specified local VHF or UHF repeater could also be provided. Organise a roster of people to operate this station.
2. It is likely that the WIA will obtain a Special Event Callsign for each Annual Conference, VK10XWIA, where X is the number of years since 2010, the Centenary of the WIA.
3. Have someone appointed before the Conference as "scribe", to write an article for *Amateur Radio Magazine* from the Host Club point of view. You will probably need an article for your own Club magazine or journal too, along with good quality photographs (perhaps hire a photographer?).
4. Displays: If space allows, and you can find people willing to assist, make provision for displays of local society activities and history, branch activity photographs, historic radios and QSL cards etc.
5. Partners Program should have a dry-run a week prior by the people who will be leading the trip. This ensures timing is right and that venues are clear on bookings and our requirements. Paying up front will also save unnecessary delays on the day.
6. Have a destination specific item for a Conference Satchel – possibly the satchel itself (e.g. 2011 Darwin Conference Dilly Bag)
7. The allocation of any items offered as prizes should be made by the Host Committee as a whole. This will ensure maximum effect and minimum "competition" between the main conference and any sub-events.
8. WIA National Office will identify the number of registrants required for the Conference to "break even" in terms of cost. As such, all financial information must be sent through to the Office as soon as possible.

Venue Proposal WIA Annual Conference Weekend

Checklist

Before submitting your proposal you should ensure it identifies the following;

- 1) Name and contact details of the Club (or group of clubs) and the appropriate contact person.
- 2) Name and contact details of the proposed venue (attach scanned flyers if possible). Include their website!
- 3) A summary of the venue's facilities, including accommodation rates/packages, Conference Room capabilities (number of seats, the rate charged, equipment hire etc.) and any booking considerations (requirements for deposit, lead time, conflict with other Conferences, etc)
- 4) Supply names and addresses of alternative accommodation (at least one hotel and one Caravan Park)
- 5) List some of the regional attractions that may feature in the Conference weekend as venues for activities and tours. Include approximate distance from host venue, any known costs or minimum numbers required.

A summary of the merits of the location you propose for the WIA Annual Conference Weekend – your marketing opportunity!