**NOTES ON ORGANIZING ZONTA D12 GOVERNOR’S SEMINAR**

**Suggestions and Comments of Denise Parrish following Cheyenne Governor’s Seminar (2020)**

**Friday Afternoon Board / Leadership Meeting**

Location

You will need a space for 30-40 people to hold the entire Leadership team. It does not necessarily need to be at the same location as the rest of the seminar. We had our meeting at the local Elks Club. We also considered a meeting room at one of the local hotels but it did not allow for enough spacing due to Covid19 distancing needs. Room at a college would also be a good choice. Meetings generally last 2-3 hours.

Technology

At the Leadership Meetings I had attended previously, there was a projector and a screen. However, I had been told for this meeting that we would not need any technology. That was a mistake on my part. I should have anticipated that some folks would want to participate electronically and not attend in person. We did have a Zoom link but no projector or screen, so in person attendees had a difficult time hearing what the people not attending in person were saying and sharing information was difficult. So, be sure you have a clear understanding of what will be needed – Zoom, Power Points, microphone, etc.

Refreshments

Some refreshments will be appreciated by participants. Some participants may be just arriving in time for the meeting – having driven to your location all morning. Others may just appreciate a snack or a beverage. We offered a variety of cold beverages, fruit, granola bars, etc…. Don’t overbuy as not everyone will eat. Because we did not use a hotel or a caterer, we just took the leftovers from the Leadership Meeting and added it to the food offered for the Seminar. I suggest you have a plan for dealing with the leftovers. If you are using other than packaged food, you may want to have some of the to-go boxes (such as those you can buy at Sam’s or Costco) available. [ It is an old habit of mine to carry plastic bags in my purse when I go to conferences or especially when I hosted conferences to take the leftover cookies or snacks back to my hotel room or to give them to others…..]

Budget

When looking at the District budget, I noted that there was a separate line item for expenses related to the Board / Leadership Meeting. The meeting itself cost me almost nothing (but remember, I did not have technology at the meeting) but there was a cost related to the travel and lodging of the participants. Based on the location of the meeting and the members of the Leadership team, you will want to make an estimate of how many of the attendees will be needing one or two nights of hotel rooms, and the estimated mileage for travel. My meeting was unusual in that we had fewer in-person attendees, but that was offset to some extent by the fact that people did not share hotel rooms.

If there is no separate budget, you will want to try to recover this cost in your seminar registration fee.

**Friday Night Gala**

Dinner

In selecting the entrée or the entrée options, remember that you will need to address vegetarians and those who prefer gluten-free meals. I was reminded in time to address the fact that you might have someone who is both vegetarian and one who prefers gluten-free meals.

Surprisingly, our meal did not include coffee or tea for after dinner in the price. Most places include a beverage in the price, but it is something to watch.

Price, of course, will be key. Even though the number of attendees for 2020 was down from normal, I was able to do a bit more upscale meal and stay close to within budget because the cost of the seminar itself was relatively inexpensive.

If you have to lock in the number of attendees at your dinner before you have your final registration count, consider estimating on the lower rather than higher side of the numbers. Most places (especially hotels or restaurants) will be willing to add people at the last minute for a slight increased cost, but few will reduce your guaranteed contracted for number of meals.

Decide if you are going to provide a meal free of charge for any outside entertainers or speakers you have so that it is included in your numbers.

Generally, there will be a cash bar happy hour prior to the main meal. I left my happy hour as primarily a time to socialize, although we did have a trivia quiz available for those who wanted to work on it. Some of the Zonta seminars / conferences I have attended include a contest during happy hour (best hat, etc.)

Entertainment

You need to decide if you are going to have something before dinner or after dinner. I unfortunately, did not get to go to the activities before dinner in Billings (2019) but they had several activities lined up prior to dinner. I did our main entertainment (Elvis) after dinner.

Since people had been couped up for a long time, I decided the entertainment would be strictly something fun. However, at some of the events I have attended, there is a woman’s theme to the entertainment – women’s history reenactment, etc. I think you get to decide what works for you and the area you are in.

I thought about doing something Friday afternoon, but I was living in a Covid world. However, we kicked around offering people some golf that afternoon, or some other activity (a guided art project, tour of the Capitol, etc.) to get them to the area early. The cost of these extra activities should not be included in the registration price but should be a separate fee. However, you will want them to register on the registration form so you can keep good counts of everything.

**Saturday Seminar**

Hotel Recommendation(s)

I called several hotels to try to get a discount price if they were listed as a preferred hotel. Most wanted a guaranteed room count which did not work for me. I found a hotel that was willing to give the discount for a specific amount of time without a room guarantee. Even without a discount, it is nice to have a list of hotels that the locals deem okay (or better).

One of the long-time Zontians in my Club was aware that small gift bags are often left for the District Officers at the hotel. She took care of this and I, frankly, have no idea what was in the bags.

Registration and Goodie Bags

We were lucky in that our Cheyenne Visitor’s Center has a program to help with registration and conferences coming to town. Other towns may do the same. (Our Visitor Center also made suggestions on conference rooms and hotels.) We provided the basic information on the conference and a copy of the paper registration form that we were to use and the Visitor Center put together the electronic registration. They gave us a deal on the cost and the processing of the credit cards. Also included in the cost were lanyards, nametags, and a basic Cheyenne bag to use as the registration goodie bag. At the end of the on-line registration period, it gave us a nice list of the registrants, their dinner selections, etc. The big downside was they didn’t give us the registration money until the on-line registration time period had passed. (But the check came quickly afterword.)

One thing I forgot on the initial registration form was to ask people about their food preferences for lunch so we had to do a follow-up on vegetarian and gluten free. I did remember to ask about these for the Friday night dinner.

Goodie bags can include whatever you like. Generally, it will include some giveaways from local businesses. I made sure there was a pen and some note paper. Also included was a snack of some sort. We made a conscious decision to spend some money on a special Zonta face mask that was also treated as a souvenir of the meeting. We put copies of the final agenda right in the goodie bag so everyone had it. We also included the evaluation in the bag. For those on-line, we sent out the evaluation with the Zoom link for the meeting so they could also do a timely evaluation.

Seminar Venue

We needed a venue that would allow for social distancing so we had to have a big place. Once we found our location, we had the option to set up and take down the tables and chairs ourselves or pay to have it done. Most places (colleges, hotels) this will not be an extra charge but give the venue, it was worth it for the cost. When measuring the space you will need, be sure to take into account not only the estimated number of attendees but a registration table, podiums, flags, tables for Club sales, tables for any charity collections, audio-video equipment, and layout of any food/snacks that might be accessible during the meeting.

If you plan to have a live meeting as well as allowing people to connect by Zoom, you will likely want to take into account your technical needs and whether you will have a live person continually monitoring the Zoom, running the camera, etc…

Depending on the venue, you might want to have a little décor to add some pizzazz to the room. We were using a big steel building that needed something to make it more welcoming. If you are at a hotel, maybe this isn’t really needed.

Depending on the location you choose, you may want to consider putting up signage to the meeting room or overall venue. Several of the meetings I have attended used balloons to mark the way.

Most of the contracts I have seen call for a certificate of insurance. We are covered under the general Zonta insurance but you will need to get a certificate from the insurance company. The contact I have is:

Michelle Wolff

Cook and Kocher Insurance Group, Inc

[michellew@cookandkocher.com](mailto:michellew@cookandkocher.com)

Phone (847)692-9200

It was a fairly easy process to get a certificate once I figured out who to contact. If you have any trouble, you can contact someone at the ZI headquarters and they can send you the correct direction.

Charitable Collection or Activity

The past few meetings I was at, the local hosting Club had a designated charity or charitable activity for which a collection was taken. If you choose to do this, you should list on your registration a bit about the charity or activity and what you are asking attendees to donate. We did it for unaccompanied students. However, I was told that some of the donations were used and not so great, so you might want to be specific if you want only new or resign yourself to pick through what is most usable.

Speakers and Speakers’ Gifts

If you have a keynote speaker, you will probably want to have a speaker’s gift for him/her. The Governor provided a theme for the seminar which assisted in determining who we should invite to make the keynote address.

As to other gifts (for the host committee, others), my experience is that the Governor has taken care of those. However, you will want to coordinate with the Governor. I was asked by the Governor as to who was on the host committee, so that is something you will want to track.

You will want to determine whether the keynote will likely be staying for lunch to include this person(s) in the meal count.

Technology

Your technology needs will be driven by what you are planning. We anticipated having people on Zoom but originally only anticipated that they would be listening in and not interacting. That was the technology I arranged for which was not intended to be interactive. But, as the meeting progressed, the on-line audience started to be concerned about what they could see or not. Part of that was my fault for not really thinking through the camera situation. The A-V folks kept trying to position the camera on the speaker rather than on the screen, so it was difficult for the on-line people to engage for follow what was happening. By the time we got to the breakout sessions, things had improved a bit. It really was a learning experience and I would do things quite differently next time. But, this was the first meeting were we tried to accommodate both on-line and in-person folks. I will freely admit that I was not a fan of having to address both in-person and on-line needs.

One thing I learned was that I could not have two Zoom meetings going at the same time on my account. This was something we tried to do when we had the breakout session and it did not work. So, if you are Zooming, either use two licenses for the two simultaneous sessions, or use the break out feature of Zoom (which I have not yet done.)

Refreshments

Since the Governor’s seminar is just one day, we planned for some breakfast, a lunch, and snacks during the course of the meeting. The question arose as to how much breakfast to serve, as many people would be eating either at home or at their hotel before they came to the meeting. Also, from prior meetings, I heard that just having donuts is not the way to go, as people tend to want protein.

Because of Covid19, we used almost all prepackaged food (bottles of iced tea and juice, cans of soda pop, bottles of water, wrapped granola bars, whole fruit, etc.) plus coffee and tea. This served us for breakfast and snacks. We then did a box lunch with sandwiches, which went over pretty well. However, without Covid19 to worry about, you have more options (catered hot food, sit-down lunch, etc.) We over bought because we were guessing at the attendance numbers so we just let people take the boxed lunches leftover for their drive home.

Have a plan for your leftovers. We sent things with attendees and then Club members took much of the rest. Make sure you have a clean-up crew designated.

Agenda / Breakout Sessions

Start with the theme from the Governor so you can work some of your discretionary agenda items and keynote theme with the overall theme of the event. Otherwise, much of the agenda was preset by the Governor when I got it. I simply made some tweaking suggestions to what I was sent.

One of the comments I got from my Club was that there was too much business lumped together (which is not always engaging for newer members who aren’t in the know) and then the good stuff (the breakout sessions) were all rushed later in the seminar. There was a suggestion that some of the breakouts be intermixed with the agenda throughout the day.

I also received the comment that there was a lot of assumptions about what people knew during the business sessions that turned off some of the newer folks. For instance, people would say “Jane, come on up” but they had no idea who Jane was (made-up name), her title, her role, etc. As it was described, it was like the old-timers had a little clique that the newcomers didn’t know how to break into. So, there was a suggestion that perhaps there could be an early session that would be a bit of a new member orientation of what to expect, regularly used terms and topics, etc. Alternatively, there could be more formal introductions of who was to speak next and a bit more contextual explanation of the topic/speaker.

As to breakout session topics, we got a lot of suggestions on the evaluation of things people are interested in. These suggestions should not be limited to Governor’s Seminars but should help guide what the district engages in and focuses on overall.

Zonta Store and D12 Scholarship Fundraiser, and Zonta Foundation for Women Fundraiser

Clubs still wanted tables to bring wares to sell and do some fundraising for the Clubs. Time needs to be put in the agenda for this and space needs to be designated. You will want a spot on the agenda toward the end of the meeting for raffle drawings.

Coordinate with the Zonta Foundation for Women (formerly ZIF) to see what space she may need for any fundraising she plans to do at the meeting. She may need a table or two.

Consider fundraising for the District 12 Scholarships. As is often the case, we had a basket (actually, two baskets) to raffle off as part of the D12 fundraising efforts. However, because there were attendees on-line who were not at the meeting who might want to also contribute, I also created an on-line fundraising event. To try to sweeten the pot, I did a drawing for a gift card (Target) from the pool of those who donated on-line. I have no idea if it got any additional donations having the gift card or not, but we raised 4-5 times the amount of funds on-line (I did it through Facebook) as at the meeting. Of course, the number of attendees at the meeting was way down from normal. Anyway, I would consider doing the on-line fundraising for those who are not going to attend but want to support the district.

Evaluations

Evaluation forms were provided either in registration bags or with the on-line sign-on information, so people could fill them out timely and we were sure everyone had one. We tried to include not only what people liked or disliked about the meeting, but also what they would like to hear about I the future.

One of our Club members (who also worked the registration desk) volunteered to compile the results of the evaluations. We then shared the results with the Governor.

Budget

When looking at the budget, I looked at the costs on both a per person and a total dollar basis. Doing this helped me figure out the needed registration fee, since some costs were the same (fixed) regardless of the number of attendees.

When looking at costs and the budget, I suggest y ou estimate based on a couple different levels of the number of attendees. For instance, I estimated based on 50 people, 65 people, and 75 people. That way, if I planned for 65 but only got 50, I could get a feel for what my deficit would be. I also tweaked the registration fee proposal a few times as I did what-if with the numbers.