

## REGIONAL CONFERENCE TOWN HALL

12/3/2020

RECAP

### INCORPORATION PROJECT UPDATE

#### Purpose/Overview

- **Background** – In 2018, the SMPS HQ board of directors appointed a task force and directed the staff to explore efficiencies and a professional perspective for our regional conferences, as well as understand and resolved issues around protecting the volunteers, attendees and SMPS in terms of liability and brand. Furthermore, with nearly 20% of SMPS members attending a regional conference each year the board also wanted to confirm the experiences were meaningful, impactful, and supporting the mission and vision.
- **Consistency and Sustainability** – As the scale of regional conferences have grown over the years, they have become large, robust, multi-faceted events. With that growth, regional conference volunteers have asked for more assistance and collaboration including technical assistance, consulting and guidance, and volunteer continuity and training from year to year. Additionally, incorporating the conferences
- **Liability** – Because of the nature of the events (e.g., alcohol, offsite venues, travel, etc.) and since there is no corporate/protective barrier between the conference event and the conference volunteers, any liability can fall entirely on the individual planners and chapter volunteers. Incorporating the conferences can provide a protective barrier like for other nonprofit corporations. Once incorporated, each conference will be included in the SMPS master insurance program and those expenses are covered by HQ.

#### Structure

- **Incorporation Process**
  - All regional conferences will become incorporated and SMPS HQ is leading the effort and will pay the related expenses.
  - The regional conferences will be 501(c)(6) non-profit corporations and registered in the state of Delaware. The Federal tax exemption will be automatic when SMPS adds the conferences to the group exemption list with IRS.
  - With a corporation, there are requirements such as bylaws, good financial practices, etc.
  - The chapters will be the “members” of the regional conference corporation.
  - SMPS HQ is committed to provide training to your board of directors, planning committees, etc.

- **Board of Directors** – They will oversee the entire conference to ensure all financial operations, programmatic goals, and major contracts are sound.
  - Each chapter will appoint one member to the board of directors for a two-year term.
  - The directors appointed to the corporate board ideally will have previously chaired a regional conference planning committee, SMPS event committee, and/or served on a chapter board.
  - A board member should not serve as a conference chair but may serve as a vice chair if their directorship expires prior to the next conference.
  - When referring to the “board” this does not suggest the entirety of the voting directors must be involved with every decision. The board may delegate certain responsibilities to an officer or committee to oversee day-to-day decisions.
  - The board may meet as frequently as it desires to accomplish its goals and responsibilities. At a minimum, semiannually is recommended.
  
- **Planning Committee**
  - The committee shall be comprised of up to two representatives from each member chapter and will be led by a chair, vice chair, and past chair, which are appointed by the board (the committee will identify the vice chair with approval of the board). It is highly discouraged to include as a representative a person that already serves on a chapter board of directors.
  - The purpose of the committee is to plan the conference, including the following activities: secure the host facility (with board’s approval), develop the content, identify the speakers, manage all logistics (e.g., appoint subcommittees, manage registration, recruit volunteers, onsite tasks, etc.), and develop and implement the communications and marketing strategies.
  
- **Affiliation Agreement**
  - Every chapter will receive an updated affiliation agreement in December of 2020.
  - The only change from the 2019 agreement to this year is the reflection of the new corporations, and that your chapter agrees to be affiliated with your respective regional conference.
  
- **Bylaws**
  - This document has been written by SMPS HQ. Please reach out to Julio Santos at [julio@smps.org](mailto:julio@smps.org) if you wish to view the draft document.

## Timeline

- We hoped to have the project completed by the fall of 2020, however due to COVID-19 and other priorities shifting during this time.
- By June 1, 2021 everything should be set in stone, your board of directors will be established, agreements will be signed, etc.
- We will be arranging frequent meetings with the chapters to help organize your planning committees and board of directors before the June start.
- This new structure, due to the timing, is going to start with your 2022 regional conference.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR REGIONAL CONFERENCE

### If you are still having a 2021 in-person conference

- **Venue capacity**
  - First ask the hotel for room capacities
    - Double the amount of space you'd typically have.
  - Look at your contract to ensure the space works for your event.
    - Is it all on the same level? Are the rooms next to each other? etc.
  - Build in extra time for room flips
    - If you normally have a 30-minute turnaround between sessions that have different room sets, make it an hour.
  - Determine points for health screening procedures, hand sanitization stations, etc.
  - Assess social distance markings
- **F&B**
  - Select menu items that are best fit for single-point service, including coffee
  - Yes: plated meals, boxed lunches, individual water bottles, silverware and water glasses pre-set on tables, filled by designated server
  - No: buffets, bars, family-style, cart service, cafeteria service or self-service
  - Limit F&B service to specific places (no coffee, snacks, etc. in meeting rooms)
- **Safety Measures**
  - Have the hotel provide 10 times more sanitizing than they're done in the past
  - Provide masks & hand sanitizer to members
  - Include social distance markings and one-way signs in all setup diagrams
  - Be aware of capacity restrictions
  - Attendees stay in one meeting room/chair or assigned seating
  - Provide outside or open-air meetings when possible
  - Linen-less tables
  - Outdoor mask breaks and stretch breaks will be appreciated by attendees.

## Three pandemic-related items you'll want to address with your attendees

### Set a Code of Conduct before the event

- **Sample:** *DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WE HAVE TAKEN A NUMBER OF PRECAUTIONS TO MINIMIZE RISK DURING THIS EVENT. IF YOU CHOOSE TO ATTEND, YOU'LL FOLLOW THESE STANDARDS:*
  - *Do not travel if you feel sick*
  - *Do not attend if you feel sick*
  - *Complete health screening survey prior to or upon entry*
  - *Take temperature at health screening area prior to entry*
  - *Use provided PPEs and hand sanitization stations*
  - *Always wear a mask inside*
  - *Wash your hands frequently*
  - *Follow social distancing guidelines and traffic flow signs*
  - *Be considerate – be kind*

### Set expectations for attendees

- **Online registration should include the Code of Conduct as well as Read/Accept Terms for:**
  - On-site rules and regulations
  - Health protocols
  - Screening information
  - Scheduling and mapping that conforms with social distancing guidelines
  - Policies for refunds, company disclaimers, no-fault cancellation fees

### Establish protocol for exposure

- **Prior to the meeting, the conference should circulate a know-before-you-go that includes:**
  - Expectations for health prior to arrival at the venue
  - Expectations for release of contact information Code of Conduct
  - Requirements for health-screening and temperature each day in order to be in the meeting venue
  - Rules for specific procedure in case of staff or attendee illness

## If you are thinking of postponing to 2022

- **Survey Attendees/Members** – Get a temperature check on your members: Send out a survey monkey asking members their thoughts on attending in 2021, if their employer would cover costs, their thoughts on postponing, etc.
  - Feel free to reach out to Julio for the Survey Monkey login
- **Networking** – In the event that you must postpone to 2022, consider using online platforms such as [Airmeet](#) as a networking option to bring your members together.
  - Airmeet is a free service (up to 300 attendees)
  - SMPS HQ used Airmeet for several premier virtual events this year

## If you have already postponed to 2022 and are considering hosting a virtual component in lieu of your 2021 conference

- **Platforms**

- Below is a compiled a list of vetted vendors for you to reach out to if you're interested in a virtual meeting (pricing scale \$ to \$\$\$\$):
  - [Whova](#) - \$\$ (SMPS HQ has used and will continue to use Whova for a number of premier HQ events)
  - [Communique](#) - \$\$\$\$ (Lobby and Exhibit Hall included)
  - [Vfairs](#) - \$\$\$\$ (Lobby and Exhibit Hall included)
  - [Hubb](#) - \$\$\$ (Lobby and Exhibit Hall included)
  - [Hopin](#) - \$\$
  - [Social 27](#) - \$\$\$
  - [SpotMe](#) - \$\$\$
  - [Socio](#) - \$\$\$
  - [Gatherly](#) - \$
  - [Event Rebels](#) - \$
  - [Go Exhibit](#) - \$

- **Cost**

- The Platforms can range drastically in pricing depending on what you are using them for.
- Most of them offer a base package and a-la-carte pricing that can be very beneficial and a nice cost savings for smaller meetings that do not need all the bells and whistles.
- If cost is an issue, then Zoom is an inexpensive and convenient option.

- **Timing**

- One of the benefits of a virtual meeting is they can be turned around rather quickly.
- The quickest turnaround time from conception to live event is around 3 weeks.
- Fortunately for your regional conference, you most likely have more time than that if you have already made the decision to postpone.

- **SMPS HQ Hosted | A/E/Connections**

- SMPS HQ plans to host one-day events that will be held in specific regional conference areas in spring of 2021 in lieu of their postponed regional conferences. More information to come!