



## **ESAF Annual Meeting Procedures**

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### **Guidelines for Organizing an ESAF Annual Meeting**

#### **“The Cowin Guide”**

Compiled by the committee for the 59th Annual ESAF meetings in Pittsburgh, PA (Verna Cowin, ESAF President), which was hosted by The Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology

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#### **Hosting an Annual Meeting**

Annual Meetings of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation may be hosted by any member State Society or any academic organization that wishes to do so. Proposals to host an annual meeting should be made to the ESAF Executive Board at least two years prior to the proposed meeting to ensure proper planning time. Hosts are chosen on the basis of timeliness and ability to reliably carry out the planning and execution process. Having your “ducks in a row” with preliminary venue and room rates presents a strong compelling offer. Member State Societies are given preference if more than one proposal exists for any given year.

The date of the annual meeting is flexible, but typically falls in late October to early November. You should seriously consider what other meetings are being held on the same weekend, or on consecutive weekends, to ensure maximum draw. Some common competing meetings include the Ontario Archaeological Society, the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, and the Southeast Archaeological Conference. Putting ESAF on a consecutive weekend may create “conference fatigue” and impact ESAF meeting attendance.

#### **The Annual Meeting Committee Chair**

One person -- an annual meeting chair, should be named to oversee the entire planning process. The chair’s primary task is to form an annual meeting committee to plan and execute key tasks.

Spread the workload -- (Name a committee for each major task!). The Chair works with the ESAF Webmaster and Social Media Chair to get meeting information out to the public.

### **Key Tasks**

*Program-* The Program is the schedule of papers, posters and/or workshops at the meeting. A Program Chair receives paper/poster abstracts, recruits and solicits proposals for symposia, and arranges the papers/posters into a program. This person should be chosen very early in the planning process.

*Local Arrangements-* The Local Arrangements Chair is the key contact person with the hotel/venue, arranging spaces and services needed from the hotel or location for the meeting.

*Tours/Hospitality-* The Hospitality Chair arranges the Thursday tours and snacks/beverages for the Presidents Reception and Can-Am Party.

*Bookroom-* The Bookroom Chair oversees requests for bookroom tables and ensures with the Local Arrangements Chair that an adequate and visible bookroom space is available. The bookroom should be able to accommodate at least 10 8ft tables and be able to be locked at night.

*Fundraising-* The Fundraising Chair oversees the annual meeting fundraising, Fundraising for the Annual Meeting can take many forms. The most common has been the sale of advertising space in the Annual Meeting Program, or sponsorship of coffee breaks or events. Raffles are also popular. Beware of selling T-shirts or other meeting memorabilia. Sales are often unpredictable, and what you don't sell is virtually worthless after the meeting. Consider preselling these items. There is no set practice, but obviously any fundraising should be in keeping with ESAF's mission and code of conduct.

*Finance-* This is the most important position to ensure a profitable meeting. The Finance Chair plans the Annual Meeting budget, sets the registration and banquet fees, tracks the meeting income and expenses, and produces the meeting financial report. The Finance Chair works closely with the Local Arrangements Chair and ESAF Treasurer, who will likely be the person receiving meeting income and paying meeting expenses.

*Registration-* The Registration Chair is responsible for tracking meeting attendance, printing the program and name tags and coordinating registration table personnel.

*A/V Chair-* This isn't a necessary position, but it is an extremely useful one. The A/V Chair is responsible for making sure that the meeting is provided with projectors, cords and laptops for presentation. These things may be provided by the host venue, but often at a steep cost. Many members have access to projectors, cords and laptops, and they can be enlisted to bring multiple backups in case one fails. Don't forget advancing remotes!

*Student affairs-* Having a Student Affairs Chair, who may be themselves a student or someone actively engaged with students regularly, is also useful to get some student input into what events or programs might appeal to a student audience. The Student Affairs Chair arranges and oversees student engagement at the meeting.

### **The Hotel/Venue**

Choosing a hotel or venue for the meeting is the key first step in hosting the Annual Meeting. You should put together a request for proposals to send to multiple hotels or venues. The RFP should include:

A block of up to 70 rooms for meeting attendees. Rooms will be billed individually to attendees.

A meeting room available Friday all day, Saturday all day and Sunday morning that can accommodate 150 in theater-arranged seating with podium and sound system.

A separate Board room meeting space to accommodate 20 in U-shaped table arrangement with food service billed individually. Video conference capability preferred but not essential.

A secure exhibition room to accommodate at least 10 8ft tables arranged around the walls and through the middle with walkways.

A separate banquet space to accommodate up to 100 in rounds with a head table, podium and sound system. Meeting room and banquet space may overlap, but must coordinate meeting and banquet setup.

Banquet service for up to 100. Menus to be determined.

A hospitality suite/space to accommodate 50 people standing, sitting and moving. Must be able to accommodate outside food/beverage. Ice tubs are necessary if in an open space.

Registration space for up to 4 8ft tables.

Coffee service twice in the morning and once in the afternoon Fri and Sat., Twice in the morning on Sun.

Things to consider when choosing the hotel/venue:

Room rate- \$99 seems to be a threshold for attendance. But this may be offset by location and local common rate.

Block contracts- some hotels will ask you to guarantee the full block, holding ESAF billable for any unused rooms. Avoid these types of arrangements. If it is absolutely necessary to secure other favorable arrangements, then try to get the number of rooms guaranteed down as low as possible.

Conference Room/Space rental- Be certain what this entails. Does it include sound equipment and setup? Or are those separate billing items?

Comp services- Some hotels will comp rooms or services to get your business. Get as much as you can.

## **THE SCHEDULE**

### Thursday-Tour Day

Tours are arranged by the Hospitality Chair. The tours should be arranged to leave from the hotel/venue and return no later than 4pm. Transportation can be in the form of coach bus or carpool, but the latter saves time and money. Fees for the tour are optional, depending on sponsorship and actual costs. The tours should be financially self-sustaining.

The **President's Reception** traditionally is held on Thursday evening, and generally lasts for a few hours. Timing is flexible, but you should set it for after dinner to ensure the tours are done and people have had time to change, decompress and eat. Beverages and minimal snacks are suggested.

Expense paid by host chapter and accounted for in final budget. There is no separate billing for ESAF and host. This event can be held in the hospitality room if liquor can be brought in from outside. It is usually not well attended.

### Friday

**ESAF Executive Business Meeting:** The ESAF Executive Board meets (usually) on Friday evening over dinner. Plan for up to 20 people in a quiet meeting room. The meals are ordered and paid individually. Plan a limited menu to allow food to come quickly. Plan at least one dish for varied dietary requirements (Vegan, Friday fish, white meat). A u-shaped table seating arrangement works best.

The meeting is often taped by the secretary for easy recall and Zoomed for absent Board members. A room with video conferencing capability is ideal, but not essential. We can Zoom through a computer. At minimum, we need internet capability.

**Canadian American Friendship Party:** The tradition of the Friday evening Canadian-American Friendship Party is one in which members bring beer/wine from their home region to share with everyone. As such, the party needs to be held in a location where the hotel/venue is licensed for outside food/beverage. Negotiate this with the hotel. Minimal snacks are necessary.

The Can-Am Party is well attended. In the past, a hotel suite has been used (with beds removed). These are not ideal, as they get loud and crowded and discourage attendance. Try to get a room or space that can easily accommodate 50-60 people standing, mingling, and sitting. The Party usually goes on till the beer is gone, but if we are in a quiet area, it can be shut down at Quiet Hour.

### Saturday

**ESAF General Business Meeting:** The ESAF General Business Meeting is typically held Saturday afternoon after the papers/posters have ended for the day. It is often held in the same meeting room and will require at least 1 hour.

**Cash Bar Reception:** This typically precedes the banquet and just offers a chance to chat/mingle prior to the Annual Banquet. A dedicated server is recommended but not required. It is common for many conferences to offer complimentary drink tickets as part of registration. The number of tickets should be limited to two maximum per person. These should also be included in the registration price or sponsored accordingly.

**The Annual Banquet:** The Annual Banquet is a sit-down formal dinner. A short program accompanies the banquet. The guest banquet speaker should be provided with a banquet meal as part of their compensation package. Try to have the speaker on by 8PM to ensure adequate time for things to get moving and end at a reasonable hour.

If a head table is to be provided, the seating preference at the head table is usually: ESAF President and guest, Host Society President and guest, Banquet Speaker and guest. Others can be included at the host's discretion.

### PROGRAM

Name the program chair at or prior to the current ESAF meeting. Ideas for symposia and papers/posters can be generated a year in advance. The past two years an information sheet and an early call for papers/posters and symposia topics were circulated at the annual meeting. It

really helps if individual session chairpersons can also be named early; they can take the responsibility to organize a complete session -- then merely report their results to the Chair.

Issue a formal call for papers/posters by January preceding the meeting. The Program Chair may design this OR may submit all pertinent information to the ESAF Membership Chair in time for them to include with a regular ESAF mailing. The Call for Papers/posters is mailed to ESAF individual members, to contact persons in the member state societies (President, Journal or Newsletter Editors), and to persons known to be doing research of interest to ESAF members. It is also advertised through the ESAF website, social media outlets and State Society newsletters.

If too few papers/posters result from the "call," papers/posters can be solicited from colleagues, or a call extension can be advertised. Try to get the abstracts early in the process. A google form for abstract submission was used in 2023 and was helpful for compiling all abstracts in one place. In all the mailings, set a time limit for presentations.

Seriously consider a remote presentation option. Often, people want to present, but attendance in person is a barrier to participation. Remote presentations follow the same guidelines as in-person papers but are pre-recorded on Zoom to ensure quality.

Confer with the Host Society about the banquet speaker -- try to select someone who is a good speaker, has an engaging topic and who will draw a large local crowd as well as persons from states some distance away. Consider your audience. Get an honorarium agreement with the speaker *up front*. Arrange for the banquet speaker's room, travel, and food, including their banquet expenses. This is an agreement between the Host Society and the speaker. There is no standard fee or arrangement.

Try to have at least a preliminary program available by the end of August/early September. Being able to see the list of papers and keynote speaker ahead of time is a large factor in generating interest in people attending the meeting and ensuring the meeting's overall success.

Scheduling the sessions: At Columbus and Pittsburgh, the symposium thought to have the highest local interest was scheduled for Sunday morning. This seems to counter the usual Sunday problem of people wanting to leave; those who live the closest do seem to stay if the symposium is important to them. At the Virginia meetings, a general session was scheduled for Sunday and very few persons attended and some of the speakers failed to show up.

Paper length has traditionally been 20 minutes. It can be longer than that if you need to fill program space, but everyone must have equal time. You should also consider time for Q&A, either after every paper or at the end of each block of papers (before breaks). Having Q&A between each paper allows time for AV transition as well, so consider that.

Once the program is set, notify each speaker about the time of his/her paper; we also sent a copy of the Abstract as it was to appear in the program in order to get any corrections (this is especially important if the abstracts are edited). It is also a good idea to send registration and membership forms and/or information to each presenter...in case they are not on regular ESAF or state society mailing lists.

Poster Session: Most meetings now have a poster session built into the program. Posters are popular among students and first-time presenters. Schedule the poster session in a conspicuous place and at a conspicuous, dedicated time. Avoid having the poster session be an afterthought. Make sure there are an adequate number of mounting sites available, whether they be easels, pin boards, or wall spaces. Avoid taped mountings since these damages both walls and posters.

At the Ocean City, MD meeting in 2023, the poster session was held in conjunction with the student/CRM recruiting expo during the Cash Bar social time before the banquet. This worked out quite well and was well attended.

Printed Program: We found it easiest to set up the program on a computer -- input the data as it comes; adjust as needed and add the edited abstracts. Get a word file of last year's meeting program to use as a template. Graphics can be pasted into the final, camera-ready copy. A printer can be used or, to save money, the copy can be sent to a "quick" photocopy house. We provided the cover stock, had them do the cover and the contents. We assembled and stapled the programs, using volunteers (you will need a long-arm stapler). Run enough copies to ensure everyone gets one. After the program is finalized, send the abstracts to the *ESAF Bulletin* editor.

Use symposia organizers to chair their own sessions. Recruit moderators for other sessions and inform the moderators about time limits. At Pittsburgh, each moderator was sent information needed for the introductions about two weeks before the meeting.

Meeting Announcements: General meeting information should be put up on the ESAF website as soon as possible after the current meeting concludes. Open abstract submission and registration no later than May with a September deadline for presenters. Extensions should be weighed against need planning schedule. Plan to have a preliminary program by the end of September. Meeting attendance is largely determined by having an available program for people to see. Deadlines for registration should be coordinated with the Finance Chair and ESAF Treasurer. You also need some time to duplicate the announcement and circulate it to the ESAF Webmaster and Social Media Chair. The final program should be printed and ready to go by Thursday (Tour Day).

#### TOURS AS PART OF THE PROGRAM

Some attenders will come Thursday if the tour is attractive enough. This can be handled through the pre-registration; determine if private cars will be used (have directions available). If bus(es) must be rented -- then show the fee for transportation on the reservation blank. If a fee is involved, be sure to have the cut-off date early enough to cancel the bus service if there are not enough participants to make the tour a financial success.

We suggest that tours not be scheduled for times when papers/posters are being presented.

#### LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS

##### 1. Lodging

Begin on this when you know that ESAF is scheduled in your area. In smaller cities and towns, you may have to reserve an entire hotel/motel for the meetings so it is good to have arrangements more than a year in advance. This allows you to publicize the event during the current ESAF meeting.

In or near large cities; tourist information or convention bureau offices are willing to circulate initial invitations to "bid" on the convention. This does provide some framework from which to barter; often, the larger hotels with better facilities will meet a competitor's price just to get the business.

Special rates? We found it helpful to stress that many members of ESAF are non-professional and have to pay their own way. (Try to barter the number of rooms required to get meeting/hospitality/book room space without a fee; you can also barter number of banquet tickets and lunches needed to get such things as morning coffee, etc. Set cut-off dates for special room rates.

As a rule, you can usually count on 50 rooms and 50+ persons for the banquet. Try to get the hotel/venue to offer a light lunch on Friday and Saturday for purchase by people who need to stay close because of time constraints. Depending on the availability of nearby restaurants, you may want to offer lunches at headquarters. (If the host society is tax exempt and you collect the meal fees, you may be able to avoid sales tax but that will vary from state to state -- check regulations).

The Annual Banquet is a formal seated meal. Typically it is served either plated or buffet-style. There is no preference. When choosing food options for the banquet, keep in mind your audience's dietary requirements. You'll have some vegetarians, some who don't eat red meat, some gluten free, and so on. Try to have options to fit everyone and avoid someone "paying \$55 for salad".

## 2. Meeting Rooms

Sufficient space for 150 persons for meetings all day Friday and Saturday and Sunday morning. Paper sessions are set theater style with a front projector table, chairs, a podium with light, microphone, pitcher and glasses with water. Make sure the A/V chair has the contact information of the hotel A/V manager to resolve problems quickly. Have extra batteries on hand for the microphones.

## 3. Banquet Room

Same room or another of at least equal size for the Saturday evening banquet; tables set banquet style -- head table for ca 10-12 individuals --decide who will be seated there before the banquet and have name tags on the table. Arrange for any AV needs of the banquet speaker and have the equipment necessary. Don't forget the need for a projector table or cart. Confer with the hotel/motel on choices of served or buffet-style dinner, menu(s) and cost -- including tax, if applicable, and gratuities. Set the cost for the banquet accordingly; if you anticipate low registration because of location, be sure to increase the banquet fee to cover some of the speaker's expenses.

## 4. Hospitality Room

This should be located away from the sleeping rooms; or, at the very least, located at the end of a corridor (there have been complaints about noise from persons not involved with the meetings). The hospitality room(s) should be large enough to contain the group -- try to avoid a lot of persons drinking and talking in hallways. Find out in advance if the hotel/motel has any restrictions concerning the time all noise must cease.

Work with the management for permission to bring in alcoholic beverages and food. The information about the Canadian/American party helps here -- indicate that the Canadians bring in refreshments as a gesture of hospitality to ESAF members. Inquiry if the hotel/motel can provide suitable container(s) for icing the beverages. (Otherwise, it's the old washtub.)

Since three local chapters of SPA hosted the ESAF meetings in Pittsburgh, each chapter took responsibility for serving as hosts in the room -- one night (Thursday, Friday and Saturday). They were responsible for procuring beverages and food, setting up the refreshments and cleaning up afterwards. Their costs were reimbursed from the fees. Beer does not have to be brought in for the Annual Canadian/American beer party. Traditionally, the Canadians and many of the Americans bring cases of their favorite brew for this party.

#### 5. Book and/or Display Room

A book room contact person should be named early in the process. This way, vendors know whom to contact. A table fee should be charged to defray expenses charged by the hotel. The recent tradition has been free for Member State Societies and non-profits; \$25/table for all other vendors.

**VENDORS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO SET UP THEIR TABLES BEFORE THE ROOM OPENS FOR BUSINESS.** (It is difficult to conduct sales and work with vendors at the same time.)

Room(s) should accommodate the number of vendors expected and be set up with tables that are easy to walk around and view the merchandise and displays. In 2023, we had 10 vendor tables. Room should have access to as many chairs as are needed to accommodate vendors and sales personnel.

Book vendors should be instructed to clearly label their books with a price.

#### 6. Registration Area

Space in lobby, hall, or room with tables and chairs. Skirts on the tables provide hidden space to store packets, programs, etc. A bulletin board and/or message board would be helpful. Packets should be prepared just prior to the meeting and contain the printed program, information about local restaurants and beverage stores, as well as tourist information (if available). Maps are always helpful -- if they cannot be put in packets, post one or two in the registration area.

At Pittsburgh, one SPA Chapter took the responsibility of manning the registration desk. The person in charge of finances was available almost full-time to assist with this important task. Have at least \$100 in change for the opening registration period.

For those not pre-registered, have blank registration forms on hand for them to fill out and check for meals, banquet, or other extra offerings. These forms are extremely useful for cross-checking the accounting. The registration forms are also used to tally the attendance report -- the number of registrations by state is reported at the banquet. Other equipment needed for the registration table includes: blank name tags and holders, markers for writing the tags, any stickers, dots, or whatever to distinguish speakers, hosts, and/or ESAF officers.

Have ESAF membership blanks available at the registration desk and ask each person stopping at the desk if they are an ESAF member, if they would like to join or renew at this time.

Know where photocopies can be made and the price for the service. Some officers and presenters request use of photocopy services for handouts.

Recruit volunteer help from the Host Society or offer free admission to papers/posters for students who volunteer to man registration or book room desks.

#### 7. Hotel/Venue Contract

Get a formal, written contract that gives details of all being provided and the fees for each. Go over it meticulously to see that everything is covered. This is most important when dealing with a large hotel chain where sales personnel transfer often. Sometimes deals made with one sales person will not be honored by a replacement unless there is a clear, written agreement of what is being provided by the hotel/motel.

Be especially aware of tax and gratuity fees added to all food and beverage (even coffee). These are often found in fine print and can add a significant amount to per person costs (as much as 30% or more). This is essential information when determining the registration and banquet fees and ensuring a profitable meeting. You might want to get estimates on the coffee service for 50, 100 and 150 registrants to get an idea of cost. Also be aware that adding soda and/or pastries often dramatically increases the break price.

## SESSIONS/SYMPOSIA

### Room Set-Up -- Theater Style

Find out in advance where the electrical outlets are and have sufficient extension cords available. Find out in advance how to control the lights for presenters using slides. Practice using the switches and dimmers. Assign someone to man the lights either for the whole program or for each session.

Table, podium with light, manual flashlight/laser pointer, pitcher and glasses with water.

### Audio/Visual

Have the program chair determine if any presenter needs any AV equipment beyond the normal PowerPoint projector (such as overhead projector or 35mm slide projection); then arrange to have the equipment on hand for the sessions.

Inquire if the hotel/motel has a large enough screen; if not, make arrangements to get one. Use donated projectors and laptops if available. Equipment can be rented; however, it saves money if a local institution is willing to loan the equipment for use at the meetings. Make sure you have the right cords for each projector (serial VGA or HDMI) of adequate length to reach from podium to projector. 25 ft cords are usually adequate.

You will need two projectors, each with a spare bulb. (Murphy's Law: You will not need the second projector if you have it!; you will not even need the spare bulbs if you have them! If you don't have spares, you will surely have a breakdown!). Remember to have a remote control or else a long extension slide changer on the podium. A light on the podium is essential. Arrange to have electrical extension cords and slide-changer cords taped down if they have to be stretched where people walk to and from their seats.

Assign someone to man the A/V -- either for the whole meeting or by the day or session. Check set-up before the papers/posters begin to adjust the height of the projection and to attain the largest screen-view possible. Make sure that other equipment (such as an overhead projector) does not interfere with the projection of the slides.

### Remote Access

Recently, the annual meeting has been simultaneously broadcast over Zoom to remote attendees. At the Ocean City, MD meeting in 2023, this opportunity added 16 people to registration. This will only grow. It is a minimal frustration for the return, but it has to be tasked to the right person

to run smoothly. At that meeting, the Archaeological Society of Connecticut donated their Premium Zoom account for the feed. This saved the conference the amount it would have needed to get the Zoom account on its own, and made the endeavor financially feasible.

## FINANCIALS

The ESAF Treasurer typically handles all the money transactions for the annual meeting and reports to the Annual Meeting committee. But this is not a requirement as long as the Finance Chair and Treasurer work together transparently. The money person receives registrations, table fees, sponsorships, ad payments, tour fees and banquet fees. They will track names of attendees and what items they are paying for and report those to the Registration and Local Arrangements Chairs as needed. ESAF can advance any meeting deposits if requested. Otherwise, these should be coordinated with the ESAF Treasurer so that they can be included in the Annual Meeting financial report.

A primary role of the finance sub-committee is to set the registration fee and banquet fee for the meeting. This fee needs to be sufficient to cover the costs of the meeting, at minimum. This includes the room rentals, set-up and equipment fees (if any), program and name tag printing, coffee (don't forget the T&G!), and banquet speaker costs. Consider also that PayPal charges a 3.5% fee on all transactions. PayPal makes up probably 80-90% of payments for the Annual Meeting.

Set a "break even" attendance goal. That is, this is the minimum attendance the annual meeting needs to break even on fixed costs (room rental, set-up fees, A/V fees, etc., food and beverage). Be conservative with this goal. Look at past meeting attendance trends. Consider your area and draw potential.

The banquet fee should be adequate to cover all the costs of the banquet. In the past, this has included costs for the banquet speaker, but now those are generally split between registration and banquet, since the keynote presentation is open to all attendees. Don't forget to add the *tax & gratuity* fee into your banquet price.

At the end of the meeting, the Finance Sub-Committee prepares a financial report of the Annual Meeting including all income and expenses. This report is presented to the Annual Meeting Committee and the ESAF membership through the ESAF Treasurer. It is the report that will determine the sharing of profit or loss with meeting hosts.