



Leadership Conference Resource Toolkit

This toolkit was designed to help you seek support for your attendance at Associations North Annual Leadership Conference from your employer. We also encourage you to use the ideas when seeking support for membership dues and other Associations North programs and events.

This packet includes the following sections:

- Sample Letter Requesting Support
- Tips to Make Asking for Approval Easier
- How to Overcome Objections

It is best to start your support planning process by mid-summer as Leadership Conference registration begins early fall.

Please adjust the contents of the kit to suit your needs. If you have any questions about this resource packet or the conference, please e-mail chris@associationsnorth.com. Good luck!

Sample Letter Requesting Support

Date
Boss's Name / Board
Title
Address

Dear _____:

I am writing to request financial support for my attendance at the Associations North Leadership Conference in Duluth, MN from October 7th-9th, 2018.

Associations North is the *association for associations* with a community of more than 1,000 members across the Midwest. It is the regional resource for professional development, continuing education, career growth, and connecting with other association professionals. At their annual Leadership Conference, Associations North offers high quality educational programming designed to strengthen association staff effectiveness. In addition, the conference offers the opportunity to network with 130+ association executives and members.

The cost of registration is \$[insert price], which is the best value in the region for similar industry conferences, and it includes all education sessions, meal functions, networking and course materials. This year's sessions cover topics such as [insert names and descriptions of topics relevant to your field, your organization's goals for the year, etc.] and the skills and information that I will be able to bring back and use on the job will provide a tangible benefit to [the organization name]. A copy of the conference brochure is attached for your review.

[If the organization is likely to cover any or all travel and accommodations add]

Cost savings for travel and lodging can be minimized by sharing a room with another Associations North member (or suggest splitting the cost with the organization).

I appreciate your consideration in granting this request.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Tips to Make Asking for Approval Easier

- 1) [Apply for a scholarship](#) from Associations North. These are always an incentive for your boss / board to pay the additional costs.
- 2) Start early – design a plan that outlines your approach, and gives you a timeline.
- 3) Do your homework – this is a proposal. Be sure you are familiar with the content of the conference and how it will enhance you professionally.
- 4) Educate a variety of influencers in your organization about the benefits of Associations North and its annual leadership conference (i.e. boss, HR manager, training department, board).
- 5) Target information from the conference brochure or the [Leadership Conference Home Page](#) and focus on those sessions and workshops that tie back to your organization's mission and goals for the year.
- 6) If your organization budgets for professional development, make sure to get your costs included and use the Associations North Leadership Conference for just that.
- 7) Practice your pitch before discussing the conference with your boss / board. Sit down with a fellow Associations North member, a friend, or your spouse and tell them why you want to attend MSAE's Leadership Conference. Practicing will make you more comfortable when you do the real thing.
- 8) Have your boss / board participate in the selection of workshops and sessions you attend and give a copy of the handouts to your boss from that session upon your return. Include volunteering for a seminar to introduce what you learned at the next staff meeting after you return. Highlight speakers, books, new techniques, practices, etc.
- 9) Include details of your involvement in Associations North in your annual performance review, this way your organization knows it is an important aspect of your career.
- 10) Don't stop asking just because you've been turned down before. You've set the stage for your next request to attend the Leadership Conference.

How to Overcome Objections

This section highlights possible objections and suggested responses to use when your employer is hesitant to support your attendance.

Board / Employer: This conference will be too expensive.

- It is inexpensive when compared to the value of learning and networking opportunities.
- The conference offers many industry-leading speakers for one low price.
- The cost for meals is included.
- Express a willingness to cost share or apply for a scholarship!

Board / Employer: What will the organization gain from your attendance?

- Explain how your attendance will either save time, save money, or make money (i.e. learning more effective ways of increasing teamwork means less time spent reconciling conflicts, dealing with office politics, etc.).
- Ability to access programming that can be brought back to the organization.
- Connections with vendors, trainers, referral sources, new product/service ideas.
- Practical skills development.

Board / Employer: The organization cannot afford to have you away from the office.

- Have a plan for who will cover for you.
- If necessary, consider using your vacation time, and negotiate.
- Absence is easier to manage now with e-mail and voicemail capabilities.

Board / Employer: It will set a precedent (If I do this for you, I'll have to do it for everyone).

- This is an investment that will benefit the organization.
- There are lots of different ways to compensate employees – the conference is important to me, a benefit from the company I value.
- Supporting me at the conference shows the organization's commitment to my professional development.
- Compare the conference to other (more expensive) opportunities you may not be requesting approval for at this time.

Good luck – see you at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa!