

# Affiliated County Meeting/Event Planning “Best Practices” Guide

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PPA believes that it is important to have one primary individual in charge of the meeting and event planning aspects for each affiliated county.

Each county should have one individual who is overall responsible for the meeting and event planning. This should be done in collaboration with the Board and may involve additional volunteers. This one individual may delegate specific tasks and in fact, we strongly urge the consideration of an event committee to make this aspect as successful as possible.

The Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association is happy to provide assistance to those members responsible for the details for the various meetings and events at a local level. Through our experience and shared learning from other counties, we have identified some helpful tips to aid your planning.

## Date/Time

1. It no longer appears that having a standard date and time, such as the first Wednesday of a month matters. In fact, varying days of the week, particularly between Tuesdays and Wednesdays, seems to particularly work as you can connect with different audiences based on availability.
2. While not ideal for everyone, it seems early evening is generally the best time. However, sometimes variations on this can work as well. It may be a good idea to poll your members. For example, perhaps a breakfast might occasionally work.
3. Be very specific with your times. Clarity on when registration starts, when the food is served, and when the program is, this helps everyone with their expectations.
4. Start on time! Even if not everyone is there – they will learn that you are a group that starts on time! Stick to your schedule. Your members are busy people and value their time. Show them you value their participation and time too! If you start late to accommodate someone – then everyone will start being late and it will only snowball from there.
5. Likewise, drawing out a meeting, when people want to get home is not a good thing. You want attendees to walk away thinking – “wow- that was a well-run meeting! I got in, learned something, and got home at a decent time.”

## Location

1. It also appears that moving around to various locations, especially covering various options in your territory helps. Of course, if you find that one perfect location – you can always either stick with it or return to it frequently.

2. Be sure to select a location based on your estimated attendance size. You will know that by keeping some historical data on how many people attend. Make sure someone is doing this and/or sending it to PPA. Some types of meetings do better at one location than others – keep that in mind too.
3. Other things to keep in mind when selecting a location: adequate parking, separate room with doors if you are having a speaker and CE, what if any AV does the facility provide – if needed, and the facilities willingness to work with you.

## Food/Menu/Bar

1. Usually the best food option is a buffet style offering, allowing your attendees to select from a variety of choice; however, sometimes this is also the most expensive.
2. If you are having a sit-down, plated dinner and the place will allow you a choice of two or three choices, PPA can easily include this selection in the registration and give you specific “tickets with their names” or a listing of the choices. With the tickets you will want to print off on different colored paper to hand out at registration.
3. Because many places will charge you to have a bar in the meeting room, it may be best to simply recommend utilizing the public bar at the facility. You can easily state this on the meeting invitation by saying a cash bar will be available. Sometimes the wait staff can also accommodate cash offerings.

## CE and Other Programming

1. Please see specific recommendations and best practices around CE in a separate document.
2. Don't feel that all meetings have to be CE oriented, it is still possible to find companies who will sponsor a meeting to do a product overview. Many times though these meetings have strict guidelines about who can attend as companies do not wish to pay for non-pharmacists. Be sure to confirm this detail.
3. Another option is to simply have a fun event or a networking event. You can also have discussion forums, panels, or town halls. Sometimes people just like to talk among themselves. Consider inviting a local legislator – as this can help you build a relationship with him/her. Be creative! Have a wide variety of meetings.

## Registration and Promotion

1. When filling out the event form, fill out as much information as possible. This helps eliminate back and forth conversation with the Event Planner and PPA. It also helps to make sure that the online registration form can be completed as accurately as possible.
1. PPA will post an online registration form within three (3) business days (pending no unusual circumstances) of receipt of your form and pending internal proof, make the form active immediately.
2. We encourage this be done 30 to 60 days in advance of the scheduled date.

3. PPA will also develop a flyer to visually promote the event upon request. However, unless this is a special circumstance we will not do any US Post office mailings. This can be attached to emails and emailed out. Or a group could hand deliver some of these.
4. PPA will send out an email to all your members as soon as the event is open. We will do at least two other promotional stand alone emails, one of which will be two-days before registration closes. We will also include at least one time approximately three weeks out in the regular PPA weekly bulletin.
5. One or two days before the event, PPA will send you a master registration list to use checking people in along with a layout for printing off name badges. Please work with PPA to make sure the layout matches the size of name badges you plan to use. We strongly encourage you to use name badges as it helps people remember people's names and make them feel welcome.
6. It is extremely important that you and others on the county Board make people feel welcome at events. Have someone greeting people at the registration – take turns. If it is a brand new person, see that they get introduced to people. People will not come back to events unless they feel comfortable and it needs to be a group effort to make this happen.
7. PPA needs your help in promoting your events. Help us spread the word!
8. Finally, we highly recommend outlining a whole program of events for at least six months or maybe the full year. It can start sketchy and you can add in the details as you know them.

**We hope this will help you have successful events!**

**Please don't hesitate to contact us at PPA with your questions!**