

Planning Local Section Events

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Planning Local Section Events

Before planning specific events, you need to know what to plan. Below are a few key questions that the leadership team should agree upon at the very beginning of the year.

1. How many events do we plan to have this year?
 - a. What types of events would we like to have, how many of each type?
 - i. Ex. technical, social mixers, plant tours, etc
2. What is our total budget for the year?
3. How would we like to spend our budget?
 - a. All on meetings, scholarships for students, etc
4. What is the maximum we want to charge for members to attend meetings?
5. Do we want to invite non-members/charge a separate fee?

Budgeting

Budgeting is important to do as early as possible. It is important to keep your treasurer informed and stick to your limits. Think about how much of your budget you want to spend on meetings, how much you may want to spend on other activities such as scholarships, community outreach and awards, and how much you may want to keep in reserves. With the quantity you have allotted to meetings, decide if there is any one large meeting or event you want to have in the year that will take more resources. For a typical monthly meeting with dinner included, consider whether you will request members to pay for their full meal cost or charge a discounted rate. This decision will need to be considered separately for student attendees. Lastly, a quick reminder that a small amount of money will need to be reserved for supplies such as name tags and certificates.

AIChE has various grants to offer local sections to assist in funding programming. Check them out on the [Resources for Local Section Leaders website](#).

What is Unique about Planning an Event?

Planning an event can be difficult but very rewarding. In this document we will focus on three types of events: tours, symposiums, and social events. Each of these may have a different goal in mind, such as fundraising, recruitment, or continuing education. The core planning principles behind these events will be similar to a general speaker based meeting. The goal of this document is to provide clarity on those points that may be unique to event planning.

Choosing a Location and Date

When choosing a location, there are three main factors that will come into play.

Region size and location: If your region is spread out, satellite locations or rotation of location may be valuable to reach all members. If your region is in a city or your membership base is close in distance, it may be possible to get a lower rate by booking multiple events at the same location. Other details to consider for your venue include adequate parking, and if traffic patterns will affect your member's ability to easily access the location.

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Budget: Location choice can make or break your budget. Restaurants tend to be higher cost options, and may not always be equipped with the A/V equipment you require, but are relatively easy to book. Conference halls will have the A/V equipment but it is almost guaranteed to come at a cost. A low-cost alternative to consider is utilizing public spaces such as a local library.

Target Audience: Factor in your members when finalizing a location, as well as the theme of the meeting. If there is one or more Universities nearby, locating meetings on campus may be a lower cost option as well as help to increase current and future membership

Monthly Meeting - Selecting a Speaker/Topic

The speaker or topic of your meeting is essential to the success of your meeting. It is important the topic of the talk be relevant to the audience, which often depends on region. Ensure you are catering to your audience by utilizing the tools AIChE provides. You can [download section membership lists](#) from the resources for local section leader's webpage. This will give you information about the types of fields your members work in to make programming relevant to members. Polling may work as well, however, it may not reach potential members who are not currently attending meetings. A second great draw is offering PDH credits.

A general suggestion is to keep a variation in the types of programming, and to think outside the box. For technical programming, a chapter often can pull a speaker from their own members, which is beneficial for last minute or for budget help. A second AIChE resource for finding presenters is the [Speaker's Corner](#). You can find a local speaker from AIChE with an array of topics to choose from. AIChE will provide a stipend to help the speaker travel to your area if you choose a speaker that is not particularly close by.

Below are some interesting out of the ordinary general meeting ideas that have been successful around the country:

-Lunch and Learns: These can be successful for recruiting, or for chapters very spread out. Utilize [AIChE Academy](#) for the "speaker" and bring in lunch! It can be a pretty simple, relatively low cost option.

-Soft Skills: These topics go over well with everyone, but especially with young professionals. Topics such as professional relations, economics and investment and general career advice are great. AIChE offers some benefits around these topics which may be a good resource.

-Current Events: Current events can impact both our lives and our careers. These may include emerging markets, large weather events, or major accidents in the chemical industry.

Once you find a speaker, you will need to discuss and finalize the topic of their lecture. Understand their requirements for audio and visual equipment such as microphones, projectors, computer, etc. Ask for a quick synopsis to use to help with advertising. In addition, request a biography. It is usually easiest and most accurate when they write a one-paragraph statement to use in advertisements and for

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introductions. If you plan on recording the seminar, it is suggested a release form be created. The speaker's company may request review of the video prior to release.

It is also common that a small token of gratitude be given to the speaker, such as local section promotional items, or a plaque.

Monthly Meeting - During the Meeting (Day of meeting)

There are various reasons members attend a local section meeting, and the speaker is just one of them. Here is a suggestion for how the night might unfold. This timeline allows for a meeting time of approximately two hours:

1. Start the night with about a half hour of networking, while people are arriving and registering.
2. Serve dinner, if applicable, and wait until most are finished with the main course prior to starting the meeting.
3. Make any section announcements, and then introduce the speaker.
4. An effective talk will typically last about 45 minutes, with 10 minutes allotted for questions.
5. Close with a thank you, ask for feedback, and convey any information on future meetings

Tours

Plant or facility tours can be a fun, and generally inexpensive way to create a unique experience at your meetings. There is no need to limit yourself to chemical plants, however. Some very successful tours have included breweries, glass-blowing, chocolatiers, forensic labs and more! These bring in a general engineering principle with the added benefit of an interactive environment and a takeaway to remember their experience.

While chemical plant tours can be very interesting, there are a few important logistics to consider. First, many plants may request daytime only tours. Second, plants will often require names of attendees a few days in advance.

After touring, consider requesting the company provide you a room for a quick bite to eat to allow for networking.

Social Events

Social events are great for recruitment, and for allowing members to get to know each other. Social events can be especially effective for bringing in young professionals and students, reviving or reinvigorating chapters or simply for a change of pace. Again, one of the top deciding factors in choosing an event type will be your target audience. These types of events are only as limited as your imagination, but here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Competitions: examples include beer brewing, trivia nights, golf tournaments
2. Networking: paint and sip, arcade, happy hour, family picnics

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Symposiums

Symposiums, workshops and other similar continuing education events can be very popular and a good way to fundraise. They can be as simple as a single speaker and topic to a day, or multi-day long affair. One of the more simple examples includes Professional Engineer (PE) exam preparation courses. These can be held at a public venue, such as a local civic center, to keep costs down. Workshops may be longer, 2-4 hours, and topical in nature based on the interests of the engineers local to your area. Offering continuing education credits for these events is an important incentive for many attendees.

Finalizing Arrangements with Location

Depending on the size of the location, you may need (or want) to book well in advance. Check back about six weeks prior to the meeting to finalize details such as menu, audio/visual equipment you may have requested and room size. If it is a plant tour, find out if they will require names of attendees prior to the tour.

Sending Save the Dates

Announcing events as soon as they have been decided will maximize your attendance. It allows members to shift their schedules for events they find particularly interesting as well as share the invitation with colleagues. In addition to email, advertise in as many outlets as practical to ensure both members and interested parties will see the invite-these include monthly newsletters, section websites, social media and announcements at prior meetings.

Send out Formal advertisement and registration request (1 month)

This is a critical element of the planning portion for such events. Utilize the AIChE resources such as the membership list including any delinquent members to get the word out. Its important to ensure that the formal advertisements and registration request gets sent out in advance by 1 month. This will help get the event on potential attendees' calendars as a placeholder and give them an opportunity to register in advance. It will also allow them to perhaps forward it on to other interested groups/people. This will in turn let you know where you stand in terms of the number of people attending and getting an accurate headcount for the event, to make the necessary preparations.

Registration Fee Collection (1 month to at door)

Once you have a good idea of the number of people that will be attending the event, it will make it easy on you to track the fee collection from each one. You can choose to have people pay in advance during registration for the event (which is ideal) or choose to keep registration open till the day of the event. You can choose to have a PayPal account to pay online or cash at the door. Collecting funds until the day of the event allows other attendees to participate, who might have had initial conflicts with the event or have made a last minute decision to attend. This also allows for additional funds to be collected for the event.

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Provide preliminary headcount to location (1 wk)

Having a preliminary headcount is beneficial as it gives the organizer a good idea of the attendees and to be able to provide that to the location. You should always account for people who decide to attend at the last minute and give a slightly higher headcount from your current estimate. This will not only show your flexibility in accommodating extra people to the event but also save you from other fees or charges by the location.

Print name tags, registration, PDH certs (week of event)

For monthly meetings and special events, it is highly essential to run this event from a well-organized and professional outlook. Make sure you spell names of people correctly on their name tags in decently sized font. All the pertaining registration materials should be ready on the table outside the location or inside (as soon as you enter depending on the venue). PDH certificates should be printed and made available for people who wish to receive them. For others who decide to get their certificate at the meeting, or who wish to receive them for the first time, logical steps should be listed on a separate piece of paper to refer to quickly.

Send out final reminder email (2-3 days)

A final reminder email should be sent 2-3 days before the event to ensure that people have this on their calendars. This way if conflicts within their schedules have arisen and some choose to not attend, they can let the organizer know. The organizer can then make any needed changes to the location headcount or other pertaining preparations, depending on how much of an impact it will have. This also gives you an opportunity to answer any last minute questions that people may have on their minds.

Ask for feedback (Day of meeting)

Feedback is one of the ways to be successful in planning for future events. There are several ways to receive feedback from the attendees. One way is having a survey available during registration, handed to all attendees to fill out prior to leaving. Another is to have a survey sent out the following day as an attachment to a thank you email sent to the attendees. You can also choose to spend 10-15 minutes at the end of the events to go over some basic questions on how well the event went. This will in turn help you to evaluate the feedback received and make necessary changes/improvements to your future events as needed.

Some questions to ask are:

1. How well were you able to relate to and benefit from the topic presented today?
2. Was the information presented in a clear and concise manner?
3. How did you find the pace of the program?
4. How satisfied were you with the AV support capabilities during the duration of the meeting?
5. Areas of improvement
6. What other topics would you like to hear about at future meetings?

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After the Meeting

Continued publicity of your event, through social media and newsletters is a great way to advertise. Some examples include posting pictures, publishing reviews, and writing an article online or in your next newsletter. These may create a further interest about future meetings for those who did not attend, and help foster a community feeling for those who did.

Lastly, don't forget to send a thank you to your speaker! This is a simple, but perhaps one of the most critical steps in the entire process. Your speaker is the reason why your members attended, how you fundraise, and a key role in the continued or growing success of your chapter.

Suggested Timeline for Planning Events

Step #	TASK	TIME PRIOR TO MEETING
1	set budget for meeting	-6 months
2	Select speaker/topic	-3 months
3	Choose location and date	-3 months
4	Finalize arrangements with location	-6 weeks
5	Obtain topic/resume/AV requirements from speaker	-2 months
6	Send out save the dates	-2 months
7	Send out formal advertisement and registration request	-1 month
8	Registration Fee Collection	'1 month to at door
8	Provide preliminary headcount to location	-1 week
9	Print name tags, registration, PDH certs	week of meeting
10	Send out final reminder email	-1 day
11	Ask for feedback	Day of meeting

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Example yearly calendar (monthly meetings)

January

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer

February

- Monthly Meeting
- E-week

March

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer
- Science Fair

April

- Monthly Meeting
- Technical Event/Plant Tour

May

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer

June

- Social event/Mixer

July

- Social Event/Mixer

August

- Social Event/Mixer

September

- Monthly Meeting

October

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer

November

- Monthly Meeting
- Technical Event/Plant tour

December

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer

Example yearly calendar (quarterly meetings)

January

- Social Mixer

February

- Social Mixer
- E-week

March

- Monthly Meeting
- Science Fair

April

- Technical Event/Plant Tour

May

- Social Mixer

June

- Monthly Meeting

July

- Social Event/Mixer

August

- Social Event/Mixer

September

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Event/Mixer

October

- Social Mixer

November

- Technical Event/Plant tour

December

- Monthly Meeting
- Social Mixer