



To foster the science and the art of soil, water, and related natural resource management to achieve sustainability.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Chapters and the SWCS Annual Conference

The way the SWCS Annual Conference is managed has changed a great deal in the past several years. Responsibilities of the local chapter have been dramatically reduced. A standing Conference Program committee was organized in 2005 and charged with working with headquarters (HQ) staff to manage the educational component. HQ Staff is responsible for logistics and operations. This has created a more streamlined and consistent process for delivery of the entire conference each year. This FAQ is intended to answer common questions about co-hosting an annual conference and encourage chapters to consider partnering with headquarters.

*Updated December 2009 by Dewayne Johnson, SWCS Professional Development Director
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How do we apply? How are we chosen?

To try to ensure a financially successful event, we have centralized the selection process at headquarters and we work with the individual chapters to discuss a partnership using a long list of factors to narrow the field. Factors include (in no particular order): conference location history, distance in relationship to members and population centers of members, travel hurdles/accessibility (airline hub/distance by car for what percent of members/distance from airport), sleeping room rate/per diem availability, meeting room cost, food cost/required minimums of hotel, available parking and cost (if any), significant quantity of available and appropriate meeting space/exhibit space, strength of local chapter, potential for unique tours, onsite-offsite amenities, hotel affiliation/history with SWCS, onsite food/coffee other than banquet, ability to book rooms online, potential for overflow, and available dates/conflicts with other societies.

If you'd like to have your city or state in the mix for the next available dates (2013 & 2014), please send us a letter or e-mail expressing your interest as a chapter. The search process will begin in mid-2010. Staff will conduct the site search in consultation with chapters expressing an interest and make a recommendation to the Board of Directors based on an analysis of the factors above.

What is the chapter responsible for?

- Establishing a Chapter Planning Committee. Details below.
- Working with HQ Staff to select local educational tours. Typically 6 or so – all on Wednesday.
- Working with HQ to coordinate the AV equipment (computers and projectors) and supporting the equipment at the event for all concurrent presentation sessions, but not the plenary sessions.
- Securing volunteers and scheduling their activities.
- Generating a list of potential sponsors/exhibitors and assisting with fundraising. More below.
- Assisting with any local outreach/media efforts, and helping SWCS HQ pick a conference logo.
- Assisting the Berg and Society Fellows and HQ Staff in planning the Fellows Forum.
- Assisting HQ Staff with the planning and selection of the Networking/Social night event location.
- Signing a MOU with SWCS HQ to clarify responsibilities and roles of all parties.
- Managing the Silent Auction.

What is the chapter not responsible for?

- Workshops – the SWCS Professional Development Committee runs these.
- Planning the opening plenary.
- A local budget – All bills (except for Silent Auction expenses) go to and are paid by Ankeny. All fundraising, vendors, sponsors, grants, fees, and registrations also go through Ankeny. The Silent Auction is the only line item that is “off grid” – all auction revenue and expenses reside with the chapter.
- Fundraising – with recent ethics concerns about government employees asking for sponsors for events (regulator/vendor relationships), we’ve changed the fundraising responsibilities for the local chapter. Instead, we ask you help open doors and show us where the doors are. As the official 501C3 non-profit, staff will do the solicitation.

How many people do we need on the planning committee? For volunteers?

For leadership, a core group (steering committee) of 8-10 is probably plenty to guide the work. Generally you should have one person in charge of each of the following, though you may have people elected to be co-chairs on some. Basically: Tours, Volunteers, AV, Fundraising, Outreach, Fellows Forum, Silent Auction, & Networking/Social night.

For volunteers, you’ll need somewhere between 30 and 70 bodies at various times over the course of the five days – but that also depends on how much they’re willing to do. During the conference, volunteers aren’t needed to work registration, but they are needed for moderating sessions, running AV equipment, chaperoning tours, assisting with Networking/Social Night, and pre-conference prep on the Friday immediately prior to the conference.

The total number of volunteers can vary if one volunteer chaperones a tour and moderates a couple of sessions. We also always work to recruit volunteers from all across the region and country. There’s nothing magical about someone local being a room moderator, but it’s obviously very important to have someone who knows the area chaperoning a tour.

How much money can we expect to make as a chapter?

The generic formula for division of revenue is: first, the chapter gets all Silent Auction Revenue and HQ gets \$25,000 to support Society programs. Proceeds after that are split 85/15 between SWCS HQ and the chapter (respectively). The expectation for chapter revenue is Silent Auction proceeds plus \$5,000, but if the conference does better, the chapter benefits too. For Florida and Arizona, they did much better than projected. In Michigan, attendance was down 22% -- net revenues, while still generating a profit, were down in similar fashion.

Additional Benefits:

- Virtually no financial liability for the chapter
- Builds chapter unity
- Generates membership
- Raises awareness and visibility for chapter in your state