PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE

The decision to have a program has been made, now what? The Board needs to make some decisions before moving forward:

- What is the purpose of the program? Be clear about the objectives and purpose for the meeting. This will also help with marketing materials.
- Will continuing education units (CEUs) be offered?
- How long should the program be?
- Where should the meeting be held? Is there one location that is best, or should the meeting be rotated to different parts of the state?
- Should the meeting be held during the legislative session and include a lobby day?
- Will a registration fee be charged?
- Will there be exhibitors and/or sponsors?

BUDGET

Once these questions have been answered, the Treasurer with input from the Board should develop a meeting budget. This budget should be realistic and serve as a guide for planning the meeting. Having a budget also helps with volunteer job descriptions and setting expectations. When setting a meeting budget, don't forget to include the income from registrations, sponsorships, grants, exhibits, etc. Different expenses associated with a meeting could include:

- Rental space
- Food and beverage
- Honorarium for invited speakers
- Travel expenses for speakers
- Name badges/handouts/program book
- Audio/visual
- Marketing and promotion (including signage)

ROLES

When you ask who wants to help plan the Affiliate Annual Meeting, you might be surprised by how few responses you get. That question is too general, and people are afraid to commit to the unknown. If you clearly lay out the tasks that need to be completed and provide job descriptions, people will be more likely to commit.

Some of the roles needed for planning a meeting or event are listed below. Depending on the type and size of your meeting, you may or may not need all of these.

Program Committee and Chair

The Program Committee develops the program of the meeting by identifying and inviting speakers, applying for CEUs, and developing and/or securing content. This is a very important job that requires substantial time and dedication.

To determine the theme and content of the meeting, the Program Committee may want to survey the membership. Based on responses, the Program Committee can set the theme, topic, and schedule of the meeting and work with the speakers to obtain biographies and curriculum vitae that will be used for marketing the meeting.

The Program Committee should also develop a meeting evaluation form to be given to and collected from the attendees at the meeting. The evaluation form should be used to ask for feedback about the speakers, topics, venue, accommodations, and cost. The form can also be used to solicit suggestions for future topics. Evaluations offer valuable information about the meeting and help ensure that future events are successful.

This committee and chair will do the "heavy lifting" for the meeting, and the Board should carefully consider who they approach for these positions.

Logistics Coordinators/Committee

This committee is charged with finding the location of the meeting. Affiliate meetings can take place anywhere: an office, a hotel/conference center, a restaurant, or even someone's house. However, someone needs to take the lead in determining the best location. The Logistics Coordinator should consider the size of the meeting, the budget appropriated for the costs, and what sort of audio/visual equipment will be needed. If many members are joining remotely, make sure the internet connection is adequate and there is no background noise. Meetings in a restaurant can add to camaraderie, but this type of location makes it difficult for members to join remotely.

The Logistics Coordinator should determine if the affiliate meeting/program can be held in conjunction with a meeting of another organization (ie, are the nurse practitioners meeting, and could you contract for a meeting room as part of that meeting?). There are many great meeting locations. Someone just needs to search for them.

Registration Coordinator/Committee

This person or committee is charged with developing a registration system to track attendees. Depending on the meeting size and type, this could be an online registration system that also collects a registration fee or a reply to an email or a mailed registration flyer. Whatever the method, someone needs to manage and track attendees.

This person or committee will also be responsible for supplying name badges for registrants and staffing or recruiting volunteers to staff the registration table. If the meeting is going to be held at someone's house, the Registration Coordinator can coordinate pot luck dishes to ensure ample food and variety.

Exhibitor or Sponsorship Coordinators

If the Board decides to pursue exhibits or sponsors, a person or committee should be appointed to develop a prospectus and approach potential sponsors. Having exhibitors or sponsors can add to the bottom line of a meeting, but it is important to ensure that the presence of exhibitors or sponsors does not violate CEU terms and conditions.

Marketing Coordinator
The role of the Marketing Coordinator is to spread the word about meeting to members and nonmembers. Is the information that will be presented appealing to labor and delivery nurses? Can send the meeting information to large practices to inform CNMs and CMs who are not ACNM members? Consider the use of social media to reach a wider audience.

The marketing materials need to clearly state the reason for and objectives of the meeting:

- **Who** is the announcement from?
- **Why** would someone want to attend?
- Clearly indicate **date(s) and time**.
- Include the name and address of the **location** of the meeting; if in a hotel or office, include the name of the meeting room.
- Include the **telephone number** of the location.
- Be sure to include the cost of **registration**, what each attendee receives for that price, and whether food is included.
- **CEUs** are a big draw. Highlight the number of CEUs eligible for attendees and whether there is a separate cost to obtain the CEUs.
- Include a **call to action** such as "guarantee a seat," or "register today." This helps generate registration.
- If the meeting is being hosted or co-sponsored by a vendor, include that information.

It is also a good idea to have someone proof the materials. If they knew nothing about the meeting, would they be able to determine the date, time, location, costs, and how to register to attend?

Use any printed or emailed piece to direct potential attendees to a website with more detailed information, including speaker bios, directions to the location, overnight accommodations (if necessary), and any other pertinent information you think will encourage people to attend.

Clean Up Crew
If the meeting is being held at someone's house, it is important have someone in charge of clean up. Do not expect the host to arrange for/ask people to help clean up.

Post Meeting
After the meeting, someone should be charged with following up with the attendees, posting presentations, and thanking the speakers. The Treasurer should ensure that all expenses incurred from the meeting are paid. The Program Committee and the Board should review evaluations and identify areas for improvement and successes.

Post meeting follow up is also a great time to announce the next meeting dates and theme. It is never too early to begin planning and marketing the next meeting!