

PRSSA



2024-2025

District Conference Information Handbook

A comprehensive overview of
applying, planning and executing

Dear PRSSA Member,



Thank you for your dedication to PRSSA. I'm very excited that you and your Chapter are considering hosting a 2025 District Conference. District Conferences are a great opportunity to help your Chapter with fundraising, membership recruitment, fostering meaningful connections and professional development. Conferences are also at the forefront of PRSSA brand exposure, member recruitment and overall advancement of the Society.

Hosting a District Conference is an incredibly rewarding experience, but it is also a large commitment. There are many details you have to take into consideration when planning and hosting your event. Reviewing this handbook is extremely useful, but it is also essential that you consult previous conference coordinators and evaluate the exciting, but demanding, work ahead of you. Let this handbook serve as a reference for how to apply for, plan and execute your conference. Luckily, you and your Chapter do not have to take this on by yourselves. You have endless resources available to guide you. I am here to help you prepare to host high-quality and successful conferences. While organizing your event, you will be able to connect with other District Conference hosts and former hosts to brainstorm ideas, ask questions and learn together.

When planning your conference, think about what makes a great event experience for you. Keep in mind both positive and negative event experiences and use those as guides for what your conference will become. Feature what makes your Chapter unique and make this conference your own. Do not be afraid to try a new type of session and create an experience different from any other. Your Chapter has something special to offer to the rest of the Society, and District Conferences can be a great way to show off your Chapter's talents and unique qualities.

As you consider hosting, please contact me with any questions relating to the hosting application or hosting process. I am excited to hear your amazing conference plan. Please let me know what I can do to assist Your Chapter. Whether it's District Conference ideas, events, fundraising, sponsorship or simple advice, I'm here to help you.

I am grateful for this opportunity to work with you and your Chapter!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Alicia Caracciolo'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small circle at the end of the last word.

Alicia Caracciolo

2024-2025 Vice President of Events and Fundraising

vpevents@prsa.org

District Conference Overview

District Conferences are mini-conferences held by Chapters between mid-February and April. A traditional District Conference is one to three days in length and consists of educational sessions, networking events and socials. Planned, staffed and hosted by Chapter members, a District Conference offers valuable experience in event planning, sponsorship, fundraising and promotion. Even further, District Conferences can provide unique opportunities for Chapter members to broaden their network and strengthen relationships among local PRSSA and PRSA Chapters.

Benefits of Hosting

National Recognition

In addition to the selected conferences and host Chapters receiving recognition at International Conference, PRSSA Headquarters promotes District Conferences through its various channels. District Conference committees will submit promotional content in several stages for recognition on PRSSA National social media channels, the PRSSA Link newsletter and Progressions, PRSSA National's blog.

Dr. F. H. Teahan Award for Outstanding District Conference

Chapters hosting a District Conference are eligible to apply for the [Teahan Award](#) for Outstanding District Conference, which consists of a prize of \$300 and a plaque for your Chapter.

Star Chapter Award

Chapters of any size can apply for the Star Chapter Award by meeting specific Chapter and professional development goals, one of which is hosting or attending a District Conference.

Chapter Fundraising

If budgeting is completed correctly and sponsorship goals are met, Chapters will profit from hosting a District Conference. When beginning the planning process, draft out a projected expense sheet to identify sponsorship needs and a reasonable ticket price that will allow for your Chapter's total revenue to exceed expenses.

Membership Recruitment

Hosting and promoting a District Conference is an easy way to showcase the benefits of being a PRSSA member to those on your campus and in the surrounding region. With your planning team, consider how you can take advantage of the opportunity to promote PRSSA membership, the Affiliate program and the transition from PRSSA to PRSA.

Expectations for Hosting Chapters

ICON

The coordinator, or another committee member, should register for [ICON](#) and help promote their District Conference. The District Conference host Chapters will have the opportunity to promote their conferences during the Career Development Exhibition by connecting with potential attendees and giving out flyers or any promotional materials. The host Chapters are also encouraged to attend the District Conference/Event Planning Session to network and share ideas with past, current and prospective conference coordinators.

Communication

The Vice President of Events and Fundraising must receive regular updates from coordinators in a timely, professional manner before and after the conference. District Conference coordinators should plan to talk to the Vice President of Events and Fundraising according to a schedule set once confirmed conferences are released. Conference coordinators will work with the Vice President of Events and Fundraising on developing a conference specific timeline for check-ins, and they can expect the Vice President of Events and Fundraising to respond to them within a timely manner, too. Additionally, all coordinators will be placed into a Slack channel. This is a great opportunity to get to know other coordinators, bounce ideas off of people in your same position and really take advantage of all the professional development opportunities that hosting a conference has to offer. Also, several online group meetings will be held, allowing conference hosts to learn from professional event planners, ask questions and help one another.

Financial Resources

Chapters who apply need to consider that conference costs can amount to thousands of dollars due to venue fees, hotel contracts, etc. This is why sponsorship is a crucial part of all District Conference plans. However, all applying Chapters should have the financial means to cover their estimated costs in case sponsorship goals are not reached. PRSSA National does not help cover the costs incurred from District Conferences. For more information on fundraising and sponsorship, please visit the [FUNdraising Playbook and Sponsorship Guide](#).

National Committee Member

One National Committee member will be assigned to each District Conference to support the hosting Chapter. If the conference is held in person, it is the host Chapter's responsibility to plan and budget the hotel accommodations, registration and transportation of their Committee guest for the full duration of their conference. No food is expected to be covered with the exception of any food covered by registration costs. Additionally, hotel accommodations must start, at the latest, the night prior to the conference and extend, at the earliest, until the last day of conference scheduling. Accommodation plans must be approved as adequate by the Vice President of Events and Fundraising. PRSSA National will cover the cost of the individual's travel. It is the hosting Chapter's responsibility to cover the individual's lodging and conference registration fees, as well as transportation to and from the airport. The event schedule should include one hour of programming for the National Committee member to present a Leadership Summit on behalf of the Society. The assigned National Committee member will also provide a report and reflection on the conference following the event.

National Initiatives

All District Conferences are required to include a Leadership Summit, Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and either a High School Outreach or Community Involvement component.

Committee Commitment Capacity

Planning a sizable event like a District Conference is a huge time commitment. If committees who interview appear to have a number of other time commitments (internships, large course loads, study abroad), this is considered a risky committee structure. Committees should budget to spend some time each week working on District Conference projects. District Conference planning starts in October and is on-going until events are executed in February–April. Please consider your commitments during this time frame.

District Conference Interest Form

Interested Chapters are encouraged to complete the District Conference Interest Form by August 2 at 2 p.m. ET. This form serves as a way to connect with the Vice President of Events and Fundraising and ask questions about the application and hosting process. The Interest Form is not a mandatory step of submitting a hosting application and is not binding, and Chapters must fill out the District Conference Hosting Application in order to be selected to host a conference in 2025.

District Conference Hosting Application

Once your Chapter has decided it wants to host a District Conference, it must fill out the District Conference Hosting Application. This binding form will go live on August 4, and is due September 5 at 2 p.m. ET. Selected Chapters must host a conference.

PRSSA District

To provide adequate opportunities for members across the Society, PRSSA District Conferences will align with the District guidelines set by PRSSA. Only one or two conferences will be hosted per District and not all Districts will have a conference.

Interviews

After submitting the District Conference Hosting Application, prospective District Conference coordinators will complete a video call interview with the Vice President of Events and Fundraising. Interview questions will assess the Chapter's ability to host a successful District Conference and will provide an opportunity for Chapters to explain and sell their unique plans. It will last 20–30 minutes and the coordinator is required to participate. Additional planning committee members may join.

Selection

Chapters will be notified of the final selection prior to ICON 2024. At least one member of the selected District Conference committee (preferably the coordinator) is encouraged to attend International Conference to connect with the National Committee and fellow conference coordinators and begin promoting the District Conference to the Society. Chapters are selected on assessment of ability to host, preparedness for interview and articulation of unique event plans. All conference formats (in-person, virtual and hybrid) will be considered equally.

Overview of Commitment

This broad, vague overview of the planning and execution timeline for a District Conference provides a look at all the components that can be apart of the process.

Six months prior

- Announce event.
- Begin work on logo, branding, theme and budget.
- Secure venue or decide which virtual or hybrid event platform will be used.
- Launch website and social media profiles.
- Research potential speakers for all sessions.
- Seek potential sponsors.
- Begin crafting the Belonging, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiative and the High School Outreach or Community Involvement component.

Three months prior

- Finalize registration fee, process and cancellation policy.
- Confirm keynote speaker, special guests and session presenters.
- Create communications timeline, begin design, get printing estimates.
- Finalize budget.
- Invite high school students or finalize high school outreach session.
- Distribute fliers on campus.

Two months prior

- Visit classes and other Chapters' meetings to promote event. Recruit volunteers.
- Create program. Confirm caterings.
- Hold Chapter fundraisers. Confirm session presenters.
- Meet with speakers (virtually) to ensure you understand what they plan to present on.

One month prior

- Send registration reminder and message to speakers, vendors and sponsors.
- Print event program.
- Close event registration
- Purchase banners, bags, decorations, nametags and any other conference materials.

Two weeks prior

- Reconfirm everything including keynote speaker.
- Ensure guests have directions, hotel reservations and parking passes.
- Create individual run of shows for committee members, speakers and VIPs.

On-site

- Assist speakers and attendees as much as possible.
- Distribute and gather satisfaction surveys for each session.
- Greet speakers upon arrival.
- Ensure all meals and rooms are properly organized and on schedule.

After

- Compile materials for Outstanding District Conference Teahan Award.
- Send thank you notes to speakers, sponsors, etc.
- Distribute the electronic evaluation survey.
- Thank committee members and volunteers.
- Complete the District Conference Report and send to the Vice President of Events and Fundraising.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding District Conferences,
please reach out:

Vice President of Events and Fundraising

Alicia Caracciolo

vpevents@prsa.org

The logo for PRSSA, featuring the letters 'PRSSA' in a bold, blue, serif font. The 'P' and 'R' are connected, and the 'S's are also connected, creating a stylized, monogram-like appearance.

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