# Guidelines for running APEN conferences and forums

## Introduction

This document seeks to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the APEN Management Committee (MC) and the group or individual that has taken on the role of event convenor on behalf of the MC. It is designed to reduce the potential for any confusion and conflicts between the two parties. We hope that events are a great experience for all APEN members and especially the convenor!

Generally, the convenor is either a member or group of members of APEN, who have the option to engage Event Managers for all or part of the event, within these guidelines set by the MC.

## APEN conferences and forums

These events are usually held between late September and early December. This is between most school and university holidays and in the time period that the APEN AGM needs to be conducted. An event is held every two years, and they alternate between being an international conference and a national forum.

Generally speaking, an APEN conference has an international focus and runs for three days. It has keynote speakers of international reputation and has presented papers, which ideally are refereed.

In contrast, an APEN forum has a national focus and runs for 1½ to 2 days. It has one or more highly regarded keynote speakers and may have presented papers (preferably refereed).

Workshops, field trips, social evenings and an event dinner may also be included in the events. The APEN Annual General Meeting needs to be held at some stage during the events. The APEN Award(s) for Excellence in Extension will be run by the MC prior to the event and an opportunity for the award winner to give a presentation on their work should be included in the program.

## Responsibility and roles

The MC is ultimately responsible for the conduct of APEN conferences and forums, and delegates the task to the convenor. Accordingly, the convenor is responsible for delivering the:

- planning
- garnering of sponsorships and other support
- implementation and
- evaluation of the event.

They may do this personally, or as outlined below, through contracting the work to a third party.

Constitutionally, both the President and the Treasurer of APEN are ex-officio representatives of all sub-committees, including conference and forums. But given the delegation approach and long travel distances, it is expected that the convenor will report to the relevant Regional Coordinator. The MC will maintain a watching brief to ensure that everything progresses satisfactorily.

Generally, the MC will circulate an expression of interest for potential convenors (either individuals or groups) to host the next event. The proposals will then be evaluated and the successful convenor announced towards the end of the current event. The MC will give a statement of the outcomes they expect from the event to the convenor and subsequent to that, the selected convenor should develop their proposal into a firm plan, with:

- an event timeline
- a budget
- a theme
- the venue and dates
- a promotions plan
- a strategy for gaining sponsorships, and
- an evaluation plan (preferably using Bennett's hierarchy).

## Event management

It is acknowledged that significant resources are required in organising these events, which can be a considerable burden to volunteers. While it is hoped that the organisation might be done on a voluntary basis, it is acceptable if some or all of the event management is contracted to a third party. This should be considered as part of the budget proposal.

It would be expected that the convenor prepare a brief that is sent to several known potential contractors and a selection process then used to choose the successful one. Under current contractual arrangements, the APEN secretariat has first refusal for handling the administration (registrations, finances, nametags etc) for a forum. It is the MC's expectation that the Secretariat should, in the event that the task is to contracted out, also be invited to tender for managing the event.

## Financial considerations

It is expected that these events make a profit. This is the primary way that APEN remains viable with relatively low membership fees. Sponsorship is a key component of the income, and the precedence is that forums have attracted at least $15,000 and conferences $40,000. The resulting profit should be in the order of $10,000 for a forum and $20,000 for a conference. It would be expected that approaches to sponsors would utilise APEN's prospectus resource document for content and format.

## Target audience

The target audience for a forum is from Australia and New Zealand, while a conference should also aim to attract 5% of the delegates from the Asia Pacific Region.

## Values

The values that are usually associated with an APEN event include that the event should be:
people focused, inclusive, participative, practical, and value for money (not ostentatious).

## Timeline

The MC will undertake to:
- seek expressions of interest for organising the next event 30 months prior
- announce details for the next event at the end of the current one (24 months prior)
- select convenor 18 months prior.

The convenor will undertake to:
- prepare their detailed plan and submit it to the MC 16 months prior, then submit monthly progress updates
- have sponsorship in place and keynote speakers confirmed 9 months prior
- have conference details on website, including registration form 9 months prior
- preliminary call for conference papers 9 months prior
- have papers published on website 2 months prior
- have conference satchel and abstracts booklet prepared 2 weeks prior
- write conference evaluation 4 weeks post.