### Basic Considerations for Planning a Regional Conference

* Form a conference committee. Identify and recruit regional members who have experience organizing events and/or have contacts in the art world. Recruit members who want to gain experience as well. Define the role of each committee member.
* Survey your members to determine what kind of conference they would like. Will the conference have a theme? Do they want a multi-day conference? How much do they want to pay for a conference? Do they want workshops? Do you need to arrange for overnight accommodations? How many would likely attend the conference?
* Think about when to hold your conference. Weather may be a deciding factor; venue availability may offer another challenge.
* Form a coalition with your area arts council. The council can help develop options for locations, speakers, and format. Council members may be able to make those initial contacts you need for location options. They know the right people to approach and how to present your needs within the mission of the organizations approached. The arts council will also give you more credibility when you look for speakers.
* Seek out speakers early. You may be able to share travel expenses with another Group. Even if your speakers are SAQA members, be sure to reward them. Make sure your contract spells out the region’s and the speaker’s obligations.
* **Remember the Executive Director is the only legally authorized person to sign the contract on behalf of SAQA.** You will need to contact the [Executive Director](mailto:ExecDirector@saqa.com) with your completed template prior to sending to the presenter you are hiring. You will also find other helpful conference planning material on the same page.
* Determine how much and what kind of food you will provide during the conference. Make considerations for attendees with special dietary needs. Remember the all-important coffee/water/snack/bathroom breaks.
* Research transportation options to and from the conference.
* Plan early! Create a timeline for the many deadlines you will have. Some things need to be accomplished months in advance.

### Venue

* Scout for locations that might be able to host you for free. SAQA is a 501(c) 3 organization, so your conference may fall into the mission of some of the hosting organizations. For a copy of the Tax Exempt form, contact the [Regional Reps' Coordinator](mailto:RepsCoordinator@saqa.com).
* Read all contracts carefully before signing. Pay close attention to cancellation policies.
* Consider the travel times of conference attendees when seeking a venue.
* Remember to make accommodations for attendees with special needs.
* Keep in regular contact with the venue coordinator, who will be indispensable during the conference.
* Research hotel options and secure reservations.

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### Budget

* Determine how much the conference will cost per attendee. Include speaker fees, food, accommodations, transportation (if applicable), entry fees to other venues, rental fees for conference venue and AV equipment, office supplies (i.e. name tags, registration forms),
* Marketing, thank-you gifts, etc. You may decide to have different pricing levels for members, non-members, and students, or for early registration.
* Find conference sponsors to help offset costs.
* Ask area quilt shops, fabric stores, art supply stores, and even restaurants to donate door prizes and/or discounts. Depending on the speaker(s) you engage, you may be able to find sponsors to fund the entire honorarium for the speaker(s).
* Maintain impeccable bookkeeping records of your expenses and income
* Determine ahead of time what will be done with remaining funds. Donations to SAQA are always welcome!

### Extra Touches

* Decide where and how you are going to advertise the conference. Do you need print ads/flyers that local businesses will set out in their shops for free?
* Postcards are another good idea. Remember to budget for production, printing, and mailing.
* Have member’s blog about the conference. Can someone create an e-brochure?
* Consider having your graphic artwork done professionally, or see if you have one or two talented members who can do the artwork. Beautiful artwork goes a long way to selling tickets to a conference.
* Open up the conference to non-members. Non-members can contribute significantly to the financial success of the conference and are potential SAQA members.
* Invite regional art Groups to your conference and include non-fiber art Groups in your marketing plan. Artists are generally interested in art, not just the medium in which they work.
* Tap into area email lists of artists to advertise the conference. Send “save the date” notices out early.
* Encourage nearby galleries to also show fiber art and promote these events together.
* Work with area colleges and universities with art departments and advertise your conference through them. Offering student rates to conferences is always helpful.
* Keep in close contact with speakers, venue coordinator, and committee members. Keeping these people in the loop will make for a smooth-flowing conference.
* Capitalize on regional offerings such as tours of local centers and exhibitions of interest. This gives attendees more reason to attend your conference.
* Showcase your members’ work by presenting a slide show of their work during the conference.
* Try incorporating the artists’ digital image onto their name badges so their artwork can be connected to their faces.
* Send thank-you letters to speakers, panelists, mentors, and volunteers