



OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

National Convention Guide

As approved, August 2009

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Introduction

OCTA's National Convention Guide, approved by the Board of Directors on August 18, 2009, has a dual purpose. First, it provides OCTA Chapters with an overview of what is involved in hosting a National Convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association. Second, it provides guidelines for planning and organizing a successful Convention.

There are two things you should know about OCTA Conventions:

- 1) Every Convention is the same.
- 2) Every Convention is different.

All OCTA National Conventions are structured similarly, with tours, speakers and social events, all following along basically the same timelines. At the same time, each Convention has its own identity, thanks to the historic trails of the area, the availability of local expertise, and the talents of the local Convention Committee.

A successful Convention is guided by a local organizing Committee that gives the annual gathering of trails enthusiasts a unique identity. The Committee invests the time necessary to assure successful tours, interesting speakers and fun social events. Invariably, it all comes together to ensure that the goals of attendees are met, i.e. see interesting historic sites, learn about the trails, and have a good time seeing old friends and making new ones.

By utilizing this Convention Guide, it is the expectation that future Convention planners and hosts will be able to avoid time-consuming, trial-and-error adventures. It does not address every eventuality, just as emigrants on the trails found out things along the way that were not covered in their own guidebooks. The items addressed in this Guide are those that are present in every Convention. If you have specific questions, please consult Headquarters staff. The Association Manager and Headquarters Manager cannot do your work for you (except as related to responsibilities indicated in this Guide), but they can be experienced resources.

This Convention Guide is based on the real-life experiences – and adventures – of OCTA Chapters. It is the hope of the Board of Directors that future Convention organizers will benefit from following the trail markers set by previous Convention committees. Along the way, you may have a mishap or two, but they will be largely invisible to those who enjoy coming to the Convention. Ultimately, hosting an OCTA Convention will be worth the effort you put into it.

As you proceed, keep in mind that Headquarters staff and the Association Manager, as well as the chairs of previous Conventions, OCTA officers, and the Board of Directors, are always willing to share their experiences, expertise and advice.

How Conventions Are Awarded

To further the goals of the Oregon-California Trails Association, the founders recognized the value of an annual National Convention to meet, share knowledge and learn trail history, with the ultimate objective of furthering trail preservation. Conventions also are reliable funding sources for OCTA preservation activities.

Conventions of the Oregon-California Trails Association are awarded by the Board of Directors. Ideally, Conventions are awarded three to five years before the year in which the Convention is to be held to allow for Convention planning. Although recent history has shown that a Convention can be planned and implemented in as little as two years, several years are recommended from the time a Chapter offers to hold the Convention and makes a presentation to the Board of Directors

The OCTA Policy Manual states that Conventions are to be awarded "only to OCTA Chapters." (On occasion this has included multiple chapters, i.e. Nampa in 2008 was hosted by both the Idaho and the Northwest Chapters.) The Manual adds that once a Board approves a Convention site, "the chapter is authorized to continue with planning, including identifying headquarters facilities, naming committee chairs, developing a program and arranging for appropriate tours."

OCTA's committee structure has determined that it is the responsibility of the Future Convention Sites Committee to work with the chapters to establish where and when Conventions shall be held. Chapters with an interest in hosting a Convention should begin by contacting the chair of the Future Convention Sites Committee.

Conventions typically begin on the second Wednesday of August, although the Board of Directors can approve a change in the date, if requested. The annual meeting of the Board of Directors is held on the Tuesday before the opening of the Convention and the annual General Membership meeting is held on the first day of the Convention. The Convention concludes on Saturday, usually with a closing barbecue and (optional) entertainment.

In general, each Convention includes tours of trail sections and historic sites, opportunities for socializing among members and guests, presentations of scholarly papers of a historical nature, and workshops. Pre- and post-Convention tours may also be offered.

The Role of the Future Convention Sites Committee

The purpose of the Future Convention Sites Committee is to work with OCTA Chapters to obtain suitable sites for future Conventions. The committee is guided by the following policies established by the Board of Directors:

- 1) Conventions are to be awarded only to OCTA Chapters.
- 2) New Convention sites should have priority over repeat sites.
- 3) If possible, sites should alternate between east, central and west trail areas

- 4) Chapters have the option to request a change in the date of the Convention from the second week in August to a time more congenial for the location.

The Proposal

Ideally, a proposal to host an OCTA Convention should include:

- 1) A letter from the Chapter President that includes an official offer to host the Convention.
- 2) A description of the proposed host hotel and/or Convention facilities.
- 3) An overview of unique trail attractions in the area and potential tour sites.
- 4) A list of area hotels, motels, campgrounds and other lodging facilities, with rates.
- 5) An overview of the host committee structure, including the name of the chair.
- 6) An indication of local community support for the OCTA Convention.

Conventions can make a positive economic contribution to the local economy and are often showcases for local tourist attractions. That makes local community support an important consideration.

Previous Conventions

1983 – Independence, MO	1997 – Pocatello, ID
1984 – Oregon City, OR	1998 – Pendleton, OR
1985 – Scottsbluff, NE	1999 – Chico, CA
1986 – Carson City, NV	2000 – Kansas City, MO
1987 – Casper, WY	2001 – Casper, WY
1988 – St. Joseph, MO	2002 – Reno, NV
1989 – Boise, ID	2003 – Manhattan, KS
1990 – Omaha, NE	2004 – Vancouver, WA
1991 – Sacramento, CA	2005 – Salt Lake City, UT
1992 – Rock Springs, WY	2006 – St. Joseph, MO
1993 – Baker City, OR	2007 – Gering, NE
1994 – Salt Lake City, UT	2008 – Nampa, ID
1995 – Grand Island, NE	2009 – Loveland, CO
1996 – Elko, NV	2010 – Elko, NV (awarded)

Convention Planning Timeline

These are milestone-type events necessary for any Convention. It is not intended to be a complete list of tasks or deadlines. Deadlines may vary. Other specific responsibilities are noted elsewhere in this document.

Four or more years out	Chapter does inventory for possible Convention site and tours Presents proposal to the Board of Directors Convention Awarded by Board of Directors
Two-three years out	Prepare Financial Plan and draft budget Convention planning committee in place Convention theme determined Written report to Board of Directors for Mid-Year and Annual meetings. Convention planning committee attends national Convention Association Manager signs Convention site contracts (i.e., hotels, motels, Convention center)
One year	In place: Convention publications plan Book room plan Tours (including pre- and post-Convention tours) Social Events Program Bus contracts Speakers confirmed Convention Web site Convention program Sponsorship program Risk Management Plan Publicity plan Financial plan Convention fees schedule finalized and approved Call for papers Call for workshops Convention Committee makes presentation at National Convention
February	Articles and tour and program information written for Registration booklet
March	Registration book submitted to Headquarters Meal plan finalized Entertainment finalized

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	Tentative bus requirements confirmed All program details finalized
April	Convention Registration book mailed by Headquarters On-line registration available
May-June	Convention Tour training and trial runs
July	Convention Booklets complete Deadline for full refunds Finalize bus requirements
August	Convention
September	Evaluation completed and submitted to Headquarters

Convention Schedule

This is a typical Convention schedule. Specifics will vary depending on the desires of the Convention Committee and location logistics. (For instance, on occasion two consecutive days of tours have been scheduled to avoid layover costs for buses and drivers.)

Sunday-Monday

Pre-Convention tours (optional)

Tuesday

Pre-Convention tours (optional)

National Board of Directors Annual Meeting

Registration/information desk opens

Evening: Welcoming Reception

Wednesday

Morning: Opening Ceremonies, General Membership meeting

Keynote Speaker

Luncheon*

Afternoon: Speakers

Chapter Meetings*

Optional dinner/reception**

Thursday

Tours

Evening: Optional dinner/reception**

Friday

Morning: Speakers

Luncheon*

Afternoon: Speakers

Workshops*

Evening: Optional dinner/reception**

Saturday

Tours

Evening: Closing Barbecue

Sunday-Monday

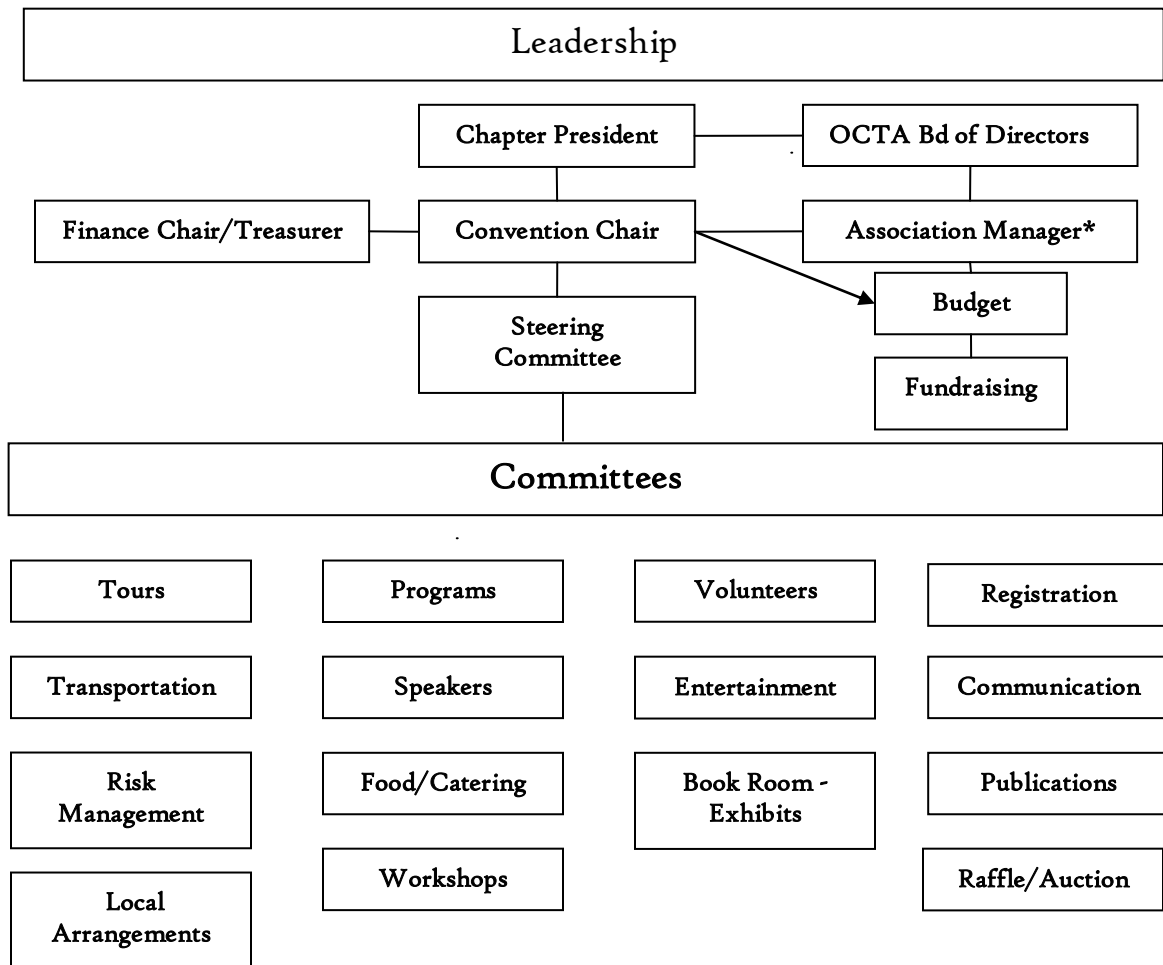
Post-Convention tours (optional)

* The themes for luncheons and schedule for workshops and chapter meetings are determined by local organizing committee.

** Days and times for the Awards Banquet and Authors' Night Reception vary. Consider having the Awards Banquet early in the week, in that it allows award recipients to bask in the glow of their awards throughout the Convention.

Host Chapter Organization

The work of planning and carrying out an OCTA Convention is coordinated by the local Convention Committee, with the assistance of the Association Manager. Below is an overview of a typical organizational chart for a National Convention. Chairs are assigned to each working committee (individuals may chair more than one committee). In many cases, there are subcommittees within the major committees. For instance, the Tour Committee may include subcommittees with responsibility for Convention Tours and Pre- and Post-Convention tours. Not all committees are present in every Convention; some may be combined and there may be other committees formed to meet local organizational needs.



* The Association Manager reports to the Board of Directors through the OCTA President.

Convention Chair

The Convention Chair is appointed by and reports to the Chapter President. (It is not unusual for the Chapter President to be the Chair of the Convention.)

The responsibilities of the Convention Chair include:

- 1) Serving as chief operating officer for the Convention.
- 2) Supervising and coordinating the working committees of the Convention.
- 3) Assuring adherence to Convention timelines.
- 4) Providing day-to-day budget management.
- 5) Coordinating Convention planning and execution.
- 6) Providing regular written reports to the Chapter President to be shared with the National Board of Directors.
- 7) Other duties and responsibilities as may be determined by the Chapter President.

The Convention Chair is encouraged to rely on the Association Manager and OCTA President, as well as previous Convention Chairs, for advice and guidance as needed.

The Role of the Association Manager

The Association Manager is the official representative of OCTA National in day-to-day Convention planning, organization and implementation.

While conducting a National Convention is the responsibility of the Host Chapter and the Convention Committee, the National Board of Directors has vested certain fiduciary, management and organizational responsibilities in the Association Manager.

The specific roles and level of involvement of the Association Manager depend on the needs and capabilities of the local Convention organizers. It is important that the Convention Chair and the Association Manager establish a positive, equitable working relationship early in the Convention planning process, with a clear (often written) understanding of specific roles.

The Association Manager's specific, mandatory responsibilities include:

- 1) Signing all contracts on behalf of OCTA. In most cases, prices for buses and meals and other contracted items can be negotiated by local organizers, but the Association Manager's experience in past Conventions can help obtain the best possible prices.
- 2) Providing the local Convention Committee with budget guidelines based on previous Convention experiences to help assure that prices set for Convention activities are appropriate.
- 3) Providing input into the budgeting and funding process on behalf of OCTA National to assure that financial goals are met. (This is an area in which there is potential for disagreement, which may require the OCTA President to provide additional direction.)
- 4) Providing final approval of the Convention budget.
- 5) Providing organizational "start up" assistance, i.e. job descriptions for Convention Committees, examples of previous registration forms and tour books, etc.
- 6) Coordinating funding/sponsorship activities and working with local representatives as necessary.
- 7) Coordinating registration activities, including online and paper registrations.
- 8) Coordinating OCTA Headquarters staff support of Convention activities.
- 9) Assisting the Convention Chair in any other respect as may be mutually agreed upon.

Budget/Finance

One of the primary purposes of a National Convention is to provide operating funds for OCTA preservation activities. While there is no specific financial target, Conventions in general provide OCTA with several tens of thousands of dollars in revenue. OCTA's national budget depends on each Convention making a reasonable profit.

OCTA National assumes all financial and legal liability for the Convention and all Convention activities. All revenues from the Convention (except as noted in this Guide) are OCTA revenues and are deposited to OCTA accounts. OCTA National is liable for all expenses associated with the Convention and is liable for any shortfalls in the event a Convention does not return a profit.

The Convention Chair should work closely with the Convention Finance Chair or Treasurer, the Association Manager, and the OCTA President and Treasurer to make sure that projected expenses and revenues are managed with profit targets in mind.

As a general policy, prices are set by the local Convention Committee, with the approval of the Association Manager. If questions arise, the OCTA President should be involved.

All Convention ticketed activities must be priced so that a reasonable profit is provided for each activity. The Convention Chair should provide strict oversight of all Convention committees to assure that expenses are managed and that prudent profit goals are achieved.

Most major revenue categories, such as registration fees, tour income and meals, are found in all Conventions, as are most major expense categories (bus rental, meal costs, etc.).

On the following page are some of the typical revenue and expense line items that should be considered in planning a Convention. For more detail, obtain copies of recent pre-Convention budgets and post-Convention profit and loss statements from the Association Manager.

See **Appendix A** for some cost considerations that may be helpful in developing a Convention financial plan.

Revenues

Registration —————→
 Individual
 Family/Couples
 Daily
 Late

Pre-Convention Tours —————→
 Priced on per-vehicle basis.

Convention Tours —————→

Convention Ticketed Meals —————→

Convention Ticketed Workshops —————→

Bookroom Vendor Fees —————→

Other revenues

Grants & Sponsorships

Raffle/Auction (50/50 split with national)

Souvenir sales (revenues accrue to Host Chapter)

Expenses

Expenses include printing, postage/ mailing services, name badges, registration bags, Convention books, cancellations.

Expenses include access fees, meals if necessary

Expenses include bus rental, box or other lunches, refreshments/snacks, admission/entry fees.

Expenses include cost of meals (including gratuity and tax) and room setup.

Expenses include room set up & materials

Expenses include room set up

Other expenses

Facilities, including building and equipment rental and room(s) set up

Hosted receptions (typically Welcome Reception and Authors Night) with light snacks and beverages

Speakers' fees/expenses

Expenses incurred by Convention Committees, including entertainment and speakers.

Convention Committees

On the following pages are guidelines for some of the committees that may be needed in planning and producing a successful Convention.

This should not be considered a complete list. The needs of Convention Committees vary greatly. Job descriptions of individual committee may change depending on local needs. There may be other committees not included here that a Convention Committee may decide are necessary.

In many cases, the work of individual committees may overlap. It is up to the Convention Chair to clearly define each committee's responsibilities.

The Chairs of all of the Convention Committees report to the Convention Chair. As noted previously, one person may chair more than one committee, depending on workload, willingness and capabilities. There are some specific areas in which the Association Manager has a role, as specified in this Guide.

Book Room & Exhibits

The Book Room & Exhibits Committee is responsible for arranging display opportunities for book dealers, publishers and other exhibitors. It works with the Local Arrangements Committee and other committees as necessary (for instance, the Risk Management Committee to assure ADA compliance) to identify and achieve appropriate space requirements.

All individuals, companies or organizations, with exceptions noted below, who sell goods or services at the Convention and whose proceeds do not accrue to the Convention are considered vendors and should pay exhibitor fees. Preference is given to vendors of trails-related materials. No weapons sales (firearms, knives, fireworks, etc.) are permitted. All exhibitors must be approved by the Book Room & Exhibits committee chair and the Convention Chair.

Book Room

- 1) The Book Room should be large enough to accommodate up to 20 tables and should be located in a room that can be locked or otherwise secured. The Book Room should comply with ADA guidelines.
- 2) The Committee should send a letter early in the Convention year to potential book sellers, including university presses, purveyors of historic or collectable publications and others, inviting them to exhibit at the Convention. A reasonable deadline should be set for reserving space. (A list of previous vendors is available from Headquarters.)
- 3) Commercial vendors pay a fee for an eight-foot table (with two chairs and skirting). Fees in the past have ranged from \$50 to \$125. (Electricity, if available, may be provided for an additional charge.)
- 4) Exhibitors are expected to register for the Convention and should be given the opportunity to purchase advertising in the Convention program, the *Overland Journal* and *News From The Plains* in advance of the Convention, at rates to be determined by the Editors and the OCTA Publications Committee.
- 5) Book Room hours are set by the Book Room & Exhibits Chair in consultation with the Convention Committee and vary depending on Convention activities.
- 6) The traditional Author's Night reception should be held in or near the Book Room on an evening to be determined by the Convention Committee.
- 7) The Book Room & Exhibits Chair, together with the local Finance Chair/Treasurer, is responsible for determining local and state sales tax requirements and advising vendors, who are responsible for complying with any local or state requirements. This process should begin no later than one year in advance of the Convention.

- 8) Tables (usually 4) in the Book Room should be set aside for OCTA at no charge, with specific needs to be coordinated with the Headquarters Manager.
- 9) Any exception to the established Book Room fees should be determined by the Book Room & Exhibits Chair and the Convention Chair.

Exhibits

As a courtesy, space should be made available and tables provided for trails-related exhibits to be displayed during the Convention. These do not need to be in the Book Room, but should be in high-visibility, high-traffic locations if possible. Coordinate with the Local Arrangements Committee.

No fees are charged to non-profit or government agencies who wish to have exhibits. However, they are responsible for maintaining their exhibits and for security. Exhibit space for the OCTA Chapter hosting the next year's Convention is also made available at no charge.

An exception to the "no fee" policy would occur if an exhibitor is selling items for profit, in which case the same fee as is charged in the Book Room may apply. The Book Room & Exhibits Chair and the Convention Chair should decide if an exemption is warranted for non-profit organizations, such as local historical societies.

Communications

The role of the Communications Committee is to promote the Convention through publicity, a Web site and other activities.

Holding a Convention is an opportunity to communicate OCTA's mission and goals and to promote the trails preservation and education efforts of the local chapter. It also can generate new members for OCTA and for the Chapter.

The Communications Committee may want to consider subcommittees, including a publicity subcommittee and a Web site subcommittee.

Publicity

Publicity efforts should be in the hands of someone who is familiar with the news media. Responsibilities may include:

- 1) Developing a local media list, including newspapers, television stations, radio stations and other "vertical," special interest publications (such as chamber of commerce newsletters).
- 2) Preparing news releases or advisories about the Convention at least three months prior to the Convention to make sure it is included in media date books and "tickler" files.
- 3) Sending regular news releases during the three months prior to the Convention focusing on specific activities, including tours, papers and the keynote speaker. News releases should be sent weekly during the month prior to the Convention.
- 4) Extending personal invitations to local media outlets to attend the first day of the Convention and arrange for interviews with the OCTA President, Convention Chair and special guests, as appropriate.
- 5) Inviting media participation in Convention tours, or trial runs.
- 6) Coordinating coverage of the Convention in *News From The Plains*, the *Overland Journal* and OCTA Chapter newsletters, making sure that information is delivered to the editors far enough in advance to meet deadlines.

Pay special attention to the *NFP*, which can greatly influence the decisions of members to attend the Convention. *NFP* has issues published in April (deadline March 1) and July (deadline June 1) in advance of the Convention. Pay attention to needs of the Editor for the Fall issue after the Convention.

- 7) Identifying opportunities to utilize the resources of the local convention and visitors bureau to enhance media contact opportunities and contacts with local volunteer service organizations.

- 8) Coordination of photography needs with the OCTA Photography Committee, and a local photographer if available, to make sure that an adequate photographic record is made of Convention activities.

Web Site

Obtaining news media interest is important, but many members will look for information on the Internet. A strong Web site is a vital component of Convention communications. The Web site should be managed by someone familiar with Web site design and management.

Responsibilities include:

- 1) Designing and maintaining a Convention presence on the Internet. The Convention Web site may be a link off the chapter's site (most typical) or it may be a stand-alone, independent site.
- 2) Making sure that the Web site is updated frequently as speakers, tours and other activities are confirmed.
- 3) Providing and maintaining links to Registration information and forms, OCTA's home page, and other links as appropriate.
- 4) Making sure that links to the Convention Web site are posted on OCTA's Web site and on all chapter Web sites.

Other Activities

The Communications Committee may be asked to assist in other areas, such as with any special events unique to the Convention; outreach to local, regional and state government officials; preparation of proclamations from local, regional and state governments welcoming OCTA; general community relations; and other tasks as may be identified by the Convention Committee. Communications may have responsibility for preparing evaluation forms for Convention-goers. Consideration should be given to formation of a "speakers' bureau" to provide speakers to local service clubs and organizations to talk about the Convention.

The Committee should look for any and all opportunities to promote the fact that an OCTA Convention is being held in your community. Be creative!

Entertainment

The Entertainment Committee is responsible for providing music and other activities as determined by the Convention Committee.

The Convention should budget appropriately for entertainment, considering the availability and quality of local acts and the possibility of donated acts. The Entertainment Committee is expected to work within budget parameters.

Entertainment needs are determined by the Convention Committee. There may be entertainment at the opening night reception, the closing night barbecue and other events, although it is not mandatory.

Before engaging any performer, the Entertainment Committee should attend a performance, have an audition or see a video of each potential performer. Acts chosen should be appropriate and entertaining for an OCTA audience.

The Entertainment Committee should review each program in advance, including song choices, to make sure the performances are appropriate for the audience. The Committee should provide a list of chosen performers, including specific information on where and when they will perform, the expected length of their act, and what equipment will be needed by the entertainers.

Food/Catering

The Food/Catering Committee has primary responsibility for all food and drinks that are served at Convention activities, including lunches, dinners, receptions, tours, beverage bars and breaks. The committee is expected to strike a balance between quality and cost. The Association Manager must sign all contracts on behalf of OCTA.

Identification of food vendors depends on Convention venues. For instance, many Convention centers and hotels require that their own in-house catering services be utilized for meals. Lunches for tours allow for more discretion.

Prices vary depending on food to be served and whether the meal is “sit-down” with table service or buffet. This is a decision to be made by the Convention Committee from a recommendation by the Food/Catering Committee.

Buffet meals are typically less expensive and work well for lunches. Meals served at the table are preferred for evening banquets. Box lunches are ideal for bus tours, although some groups will cater meals for noon stops.

Take precautions in all instances against running out of food. Nothing is more irritating to Convention attendees. Secure agreements with food providers to safeguard against this eventuality.

Some considerations:

- 1) The Food/Catering Committee should work closely with the Local Arrangements, Tours and Transportation committees to ascertain specific needs for various activities.
- 2) Prices must be negotiated in advanced and are subject to a written contract with complete specifications.
- 3) For buffets, ensure that the caterer can set up enough serving lines to protect against long waits.
- 4) For sit-down meals, offer at least two menu options (i.e. chicken or beef) that can be selected by attendees at the time of registration. Vegetarian meals or meals for those with special dietary needs should be available if requested in advance (include this on the registration form).
- 5) For tour box lunches, a variety of sandwiches should be available (i.e. turkey, beef, ham), well as a variety of fruit. Precautions should be taken against spoilage in hot weather.
- 6) Beverages on tours should include a range of options, including some sugared soft drinks, a larger number of diet drinks, fruit juices and water. Lots of water. These can usually be purchased most economically from local stores such as Costco or Sam's

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- Club. Ice chests (and ice!) are mandatory. Estimate four drinks per day per person on tours.
- 7) The Committee should, whenever possible, “taste test” foods in advance, including dinner menu items and box lunches.
 - 8) Stay in close contact with caterers. Typically a caterer will set a deadline by which the meal guarantee is required.
 - 9) Beverage bars are “cash” or “no host” bars. The local committee is not expected to pay for the beverage preferences of Convention attendees. Ensure that a variety of soft drinks, beers, liquors and wines will be available. Caution: Read the fine print; some beverage contracts set a minimum of sales and may charge a fee if the minimum is not met.

Local Arrangements

Once a decision is made by the Convention Committee on venues, the primary responsibility for making arrangements for all facilities and equipment needed for Convention activities and coordinating their use lies with the Local Arrangements Committee.

Specific responsibilities include:

- 1) Working with the host hotel and/or Convention center staff and various Convention committees to make sure there is adequate and safe space for all activities, including programs, meals, the Book Room, exhibits, chapter meetings, registration, workshops, receptions, tour bus loading, and other activities.

Room needs include large presentation rooms for general and plenary sessions, banquet rooms, workshop rooms, Book Room, space for exhibits, room for the Board meeting, space for registration and a meeting area for the Convention Chair. Equipment needs include tables, chairs, microphones, audio-visual and computer equipment, etc. (Compare prices since audio-visual equipment often can be rented at a lower price from local suppliers, if permitted by the Convention site.) In some cases, such as the Book Room and Raffle areas, locked rooms are required. All rooms must have adequate lighting, clearly marked exits and be ADA compliant.

- 2) Working with the Food & Catering Committee to ensure that adequate food and beverage services are available for breakfast, lunch and dinner gatherings and breaks (not mandatory; water only is adequate).
- 3) Being available to troubleshoot problems arising during the Convention involving the use of any in-house facilities or equipment.
- 4) Establishing policies, with approval of the Convention Chair, for allocating complimentary rooms at the host hotel. Past priorities have included, in order:
 - a) Rooms for non-OCTA members honored or presented with awards
 - b) Rooms for special invited guests
 - c) Room for the Convention chair to conduct business during the Convention

Providing complimentary rooms from the host hotel is an accepted industry practice. In the eventuality that no complimentary rooms are available, or if additional rooms are needed, rooms may be paid for as a Convention expense, as determined by the Convention Chair.

- 5) Identifying and making available to prospective Convention attendees (in the Registration Booklet) the availability of all accommodations near the Convention location, including hotels, motels, campgrounds and RV parks. The Local Arrangements Committee, working with the Association Manager, should make an

effort to secure favorable room rates for those attending the Convention. (This information needs to be provided to the Publications and Registration Committees.)

NOTE: Hotel costs over \$100 per night will discourage attendance, based on the 2007 survey. Convention organizers should make certain there are a variety of hotel options at different price options available for those who attend the Convention.

- 6) Identifying methods of public transportation, including airlines and rail lines, and securing favorable rates if possible. Also, identifying local shuttle or taxi services and parking availabilities on site.

Programs

The Program Committee is responsible for securing and scheduling quality presentations by speakers in keeping with the theme of the Convention established by the Convention Committee, and for planning program elements of special activities such as the Awards Banquet, the General Membership Meeting, and other events.

The Committee works within a budget established by the Convention Committee for the payment of any fees, honorariums or expenses required by speakers, workshop leaders and others.

Speakers

- 1) The presentation of papers typically are scheduled for 1½ to two days (including the Keynote address), most usually on Wednesday and Friday. (Speakers at banquets and luncheons are optional.)
- 2) Following that schedule, the Keynote speaker usually appears on Wednesday morning following the General Membership meeting. Up to four additional speakers focusing on local trail topics will be needed on Wednesday and up to six speakers on Friday.
- 3) Concurrent speakers are to be discouraged to allow greater exposure for all speakers and to prevent Convention attendees from missing a potentially interesting topic because of a schedule conflict.
- 4) As a general rule, each presentation should be limited to no more than 40 minutes (including time for Q&A), with a 5-10-minute break between speakers. (The Program Committee should be prepared with back-up speakers in case of a last minute cancellation.)
- 5) The Program Committee should focus on obtaining speakers who can address topics of interest to the area in which the Convention is held. The Committee should strive for “scholarly” and entertaining presentations that contribute to an understanding of the trails or history of the area.
- 6) Speakers should be informed that their papers may be considered for publication in the *Overland Journal*. They should be prepared to provide a written and footnoted copy of their papers, with photos if at all possible. Speakers are responsible for clearing rights for use of materials and may be asked to sign permission or right to use forms.
- 7) A call for papers should be published in *News From The Plains* in the summer of the year prior to the Convention. The Program Committee may also consider extending the invitation for papers to colleges, universities, history associations and other groups that may have an interest in making a presentation to an OCTA audience.

- 8) The Program Committee should notify the Local Arrangements Committee of speaker needs for required audio-visual and computer equipment.

Honorariums

Honorariums, speaker fees and/or travel and lodging expenses are permitted, but should be kept to a minimum and in line with the Convention budget. Payments should be decided upon by the Program chair in consultation with the Convention Chair. Honorariums for OCTA Conventions typically fall in the \$100 to \$300 range. Complimentary registration for speakers is acceptable and encouraged as a benefit of their participation. Many times speakers accept complimentary registration and meals in lieu of fees. Speakers are not automatically entitled to, and often do not expect, an honorarium.

Workshops

Workshops should be scheduled during a late afternoon or evening time frame when there are no competing activities. Workshops typically focus on specific topics (such as Membership, Archaeology, Chapter Building, Preservation, using Paper Trail, Convention Planning, Mapping, etc.) that offer hands-on information for Convention-goers. A call for workshops should be published in *News From The Plains* at least a year prior to the Convention. Fees for workshops should be priced low to cover the cost of materials. Honorariums for workshop leaders are allowed, but should be minimal.

Other Program-related Activities

The Program Committee will coordinate arrangements for the Awards Banquet, Auction, Opening Night Reception and some other activities, working with the National Awards Committee, local Entertainment, Local Arrangements and other committees as appropriate.

Publications

The Convention Publications Committee has two primary responsibilities:

- 1) Preparation of the Registration Booklet that is mailed to all OCTA members.
- 2) Preparation of Convention Book that conventioners can use to enhance their understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the Convention area generally and Convention tours specifically. It is also an outstanding memento of the Convention.

Registration Booklet

The Registration Booklet, prepared with the assistance of the Registration Committee and other Convention committees, includes printed registration forms, the Convention schedule, and information about speakers, tours, entertainment, lodging, workshops, meals, special events, and general Convention logistics, and information for individuals with special needs. The Registration Booklet should be delivered to OCTA Headquarters for printing no later than March 15. Electronic delivery is preferred.

While recipients of the Registration Booklet are encouraged to register on-line, many people mail in their registration. Registration materials should include a registration form to be completed by the attendee and a return envelope addressed to OCTA Headquarters for mailing. (Examples of previous registration forms are available from Headquarters.)

Convention Book

Each registrant for the Convention will receive a free copy of the Convention Book. (Additional copies may be made available for sale.) Production of the Convention Book should be a line item in the Convention budget.

The Convention Book will include general information about trails in the Convention area and specific information about each of the tours, including maps, facts and even diary quotes relevant to the places visited. It is preferred that one book be created that includes all tour information, rather than produce a separate book for each tour. This is more cost-effective and preferred by Convention-goers.

The Convention Publications Committee Chair is responsible for collecting information about each of the tours, including photos, maps and text, and compiling it in an appropriate format. The chair works closely with the Tours Committee chair in making this happen.

Unless the chair feels personally knowledgeable enough to write it, consideration should be given to having a local historian or editor write an introductory article providing an overview of trails in the area and placing them in context with Overland trails generally.

There is no limit to information to be included in the Convention Book, nor are there restrictions as to size and format. However, tour participants will want to carry the book with

them, so it should be of a size suitable for easy transport. If photographs are used, take care to make sure they are clear and readable. Work with your printer to assure that photographs are provided in proper format for reproduction.

Plan to have the Convention Book finalized at least 4-6 weeks (more is better) prior to the Convention and to the printer at least one month prior to the Convention.

The Convention Publications Committee also prepares a two-fold, 8.5 x 11-inch “pocket schedule” that will be included in packets handed out at registration and which provides the most up-to-date official schedule of Convention events. These should be overprinted (at least 100) since Convention attendees will need to replace those that are lost or misplaced.

Raffle/Auction

Two staples of an OCTA Convention (and money-making opportunities for the Host Chapter) are the raffle and the silent and live auctions. Organizing and implementing these activities is the responsibility of the Raffle/Auction Committee.

The raffle and auctions are one of the few money-making opportunities for the Host Chapter in connection with the Convention. All revenues are shared 50/50 with OCTA National.

The Raffle/Auction Committee should coordinate with the Local Arrangements Committee to identify a room with adequate table space where raffle and auction items can be displayed and silent auction bids can be placed and arrange for adequate table space.

The Committee begins soliciting items well in advance of the Convention, making an announcement in *News From The Plains* and Chapter newsletters, and working with local Chapter members. Efforts should also be made to reach out to local merchants for donations.

Shortly before the Convention, the Committee determines which items will be included in the raffle, the silent auction or the live auction. Normally more expensive or valuable items are reserved for the live auction.

Volunteers sell raffle tickets during the Convention (suggested price: \$1 each or six for \$5) and staff the raffle room to sell tickets and distribute prizes.

Raffle drawings are held a minimum of once daily on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Saturday is optional) and winning numbers posted in a conspicuous location.

Registration

The primary function of the Registration Committee is to make certain that all registration procedures are carried out in an accurate and timely manner, coordinating with OCTA Headquarters and the Convention Committee.

The actual process of registration has changed greatly in the past few years with the availability of online registration. It is expected that use of online registration resources will increase each year. However, paper/manual registration will continue to be available.

Responsibility for setting up online registration lies with Headquarters, which coordinates procedures with the local Registration Committee. Online registration should be available no later than April 15 in advance of the Convention. Paper materials are mailed at the same time.

At the Convention, volunteers staff the Registration area. In many cases, they are the first OCTA contact that people make upon arrival. Volunteers should be prepared to answer a multitude of questions during the Convention about everything from the location of meeting rooms and restrooms to what to do about lost tickets and where the tour buses load. They are on the front lines of OCTA hospitality!

General responsibilities of the local Registration Committee include:

- 1) Coordinating online registration with Headquarters.
- 2) Data input for all registration information received from Headquarters.
- 3) Coordinating materials for the Publications Committee to include in the Registration Booklet.
- 4) Preparing and mailing confirmation materials to those who register for the Convention.
- 5) Recruiting volunteers to prepare Convention materials given to attendees upon check in and to staff the registration area during the Convention.
- 6) Acquiring necessary materials for registration packets (including Convention Books and brochures, event tickets, name tags and local visitor information).
- 7) Overseeing printing and preparation of color-coded tickets for various paid events, including tours and meals.
- 8) Overseeing preparation of name tags for attendees.

Names should be large enough to read from a reasonable distance. Name tag information should include first and last name, city of residence, chapter affiliation (if any), OCTA office held (if any), and Host Committee membership (if appropriate). A small sticker or ribbon identifying first-time attendees is also recommended. Name tag holders in the form of pouches that are worn around the neck and can carry event and meal tickets are encouraged.

- 9) Coordinating receipt of registration information from OCTA Headquarters so that registration packets are complete and accurate.
- 10) Registering new or late arrivals during the Convention.

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- 11) Selling available tickets for tours, meals, etc.
- 12) Accurately track incoming monies and deposit with Headquarters Manager at the end of each day, along with proper documentation.
- 13) Having available at the registration table from the first day forms to report volunteer hours and Convention evaluation forms.

Since all registration materials are to be mailed (or sent electronically) to Headquarters, it is up to Headquarters staff to keep the local Registration Committee and Convention Chair informed with up-to-date information – on a mutually agreed upon schedule and in a mutually agreed upon format – so that the Convention Registration Committee can perform data input in a timely manner and Convention committees are able to plan for various meals, tours, etc.

Risk Management

In recent years, it has become increasingly important to prepare for accidents, illness and other untoward eventualities. That has created the need for a Risk Management Committee.

The committee's responsibilities include:

- 1) Preparing an emergency contact plan or plans for all Convention activities. The plan/s should be distributed to all Convention Committee chairs and OCTA representatives.
- 2) Providing phone numbers and locations of local emergency responders, hospitals and non-emergency care facilities, as well as the cell phone numbers of Convention chairs and OCTA representatives.
- 3) Coordinating with Convention facilities and bus companies, who should have their own emergency procedures (make sure they do!).
- 4) Making sure that buses on tours have cell phones. If a tour will be out of cell phone range, identify other communications alternatives.
- 5) Forewarning tour participants of weather and terrain conditions, the need for proper footwear and clothing, and the need to stay hydrated (especially important on hiking tours).
- 6) Notifying the Convention Chair if a Convention attendee is taken to a hospital for any reason.
- 7) Assuring that first aid kits are available at all times on tours. If at all possible, someone CPR-certified should be on all tours. The Risk Management Committee should set guidelines for use of first aid materials and administering first aid in an emergency.
- 8) Developing procedures for the participation of handicapped, physically challenged or "special needs" individuals in all tours and Convention activities. The Committee should be familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its regulations and requirements.

See **Appendix C** for information about Acknowledgement of Risk forms.

Tours

Responsibility rests with the Tours Committee for planning, organizing, scheduling and staffing all tours conducted during the Convention week, including any pre- and post-Convention tours. Tours are a highlight of any OCTA Convention and should be planned carefully.

The Tours Committee is responsible for establishing routes to be taken, sites to be visited and all of the many details associated with a tour, with the exception of securing buses, which is a responsibility of the Transportation Committee (see next section). The Tours and Transportation committees work together closely.

Tours

- 1) Convention tours typically be scheduled on Thursday and Saturday during the Convention, with 2-4 tours on each day. Tours may be duplicated on both days.
- 2) Plan for a mix of tours to accommodate the varying desires and physical abilities of Convention attendees. This may include tours where passengers walk very little, bus tours involving short hikes of up to a mile, and tours allowing for longer hikes of up to 3-4 miles or more. Mini-tours (half day) for city tours and unique local attractions may be included.
- 3) Tours can begin as early as 7 a.m., but should be scheduled to return in time for participants to relax and refresh before any evening activities. Staggering departure times can help minimize confusion.
- 4) Frequent stops are encouraged during tours. Long drives between stops at historic locations are not desirable.
- 5) The use of good PA systems on buses is essential. The microphone and speaker system should be checked out ahead of time and the volunteer speaking should be trained to properly use the equipment.
- 6) There are several considerations to keep in mind when dealing with buses:
 - Buses in tour groups travel more slowly than private vehicles.
 - Time should be allocated to load and unload buses at each stop (20 minutes to load and 20 minutes to unload is a good rule.
 - Buses cannot go everywhere that private vehicle can travel. Be sure the Transportation Chair has a map and printed route to give the bus company. Plan to run the route with an employee of the bus company prior to the tour.
 - Buses traveling on dirt roads may not be able to run air conditioning systems, which may result in discomfort for riders.

Tour Guides

The success of a tour is a combination of the sites visited and the knowledge and communications skills of the tour guide. Tour guides and assistants should be knowledgeable about the route and the historic sites that will be visited and passed by.

Once the tour guides are identified, it is essential that they be trained. A full-day of training is recommended, including full drive-by rehearsals of the tour routes. Specific itineraries, sometimes down to the tenth of a mile, should be committed to paper. Tour guides should be encouraged to develop scripts that can be read to bus passengers during the tour sharing local history and identifying local landmarks, regardless of whether they involve a stop.

Other considerations

- The Tour Committee should work closely with the Transportation and Food & Catering committees to designate locations for lunch stops.
- Appropriate rest stops (with restrooms) should be pre-determined along the route.
- Buses should be named, numbered and/or color-coordinated so that riders can easily identify the bus to which they were assigned and return to the correct bus.
- Attendance must be taken at the beginning of the tour and after each stop so no one is left behind.
- As a general policy, all tour participants must be in tour buses. Private vehicles are permitted only under special conditions and with advance notice. These will be limited to individuals with disabilities or specific health problems that prevent them accessing or riding in buses. A handicapped accessible van can be used if needed. Regardless, full cost of the tour is charged.

Pre- and Post-Convention Tours

Pre- and Post-Convention tours are optional and not a mandatory component of any Convention. However, they are popular additions and are encouraged. Some considerations include:

- 1) The Tour Committee should have a subcommittee to deal exclusively with pre- and post-Convention tours. The chair of the Tour Committee is expected to make sure they meet OCTA standards.
- 2) Pre-Convention tours should conclude no later than Tuesday, assuming the Convention officially opens on Wednesday. Post-Convention tours should begin no sooner than the Sunday following the Convention.

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- 3) Both pre- and post-Convention tours may be from a half-day to two days in length and are designed to reach more remote trail areas or those areas not readily accessible to regular Convention tours.
- 4) Transportation for these tours is likely to include private vehicles and be limited to a fixed number of vehicles. High-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles may be required and may be made mandatory for participation. If it is not mandatory, arrangements should be made for allowing passengers who do not have such vehicles.
- 5) Participants need to be advised of available accommodations, including camp sites, motels and hotels; rest stops; suggested places to eat or whether they need to provide their own food; and availability of water.
- 6) Pre- and post-Convention tour leaders should distribute one-page tour "guidelines," spelling out "rules of the road" that ensure a safe, efficient, fun, informative tour.

See **Appendix C** for information about Acknowledgement of Risk forms.

Transportation

The Transportation Committee has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is adequate transportation for any Convention activity beyond walking distance from the Convention headquarters. This includes:

Buses

With the participation of the Association Manager, the Committee negotiates for and reserves buses for Convention tours. The Association Manager signs all contracts on behalf of OCTA.

Practical considerations include:

- 1) Potential carriers should be contacted immediately after the Convention is awarded to the chapter. Be prepared to provide estimates of the numbers participating in the tours and the general routes. Six buses per day is a good place to start.
- 2) Public carriers have rate scales based on time and mileage, with separate fees for drivers. Normally tips for drivers are incorporated in the contract. OCTA has not normally directly paid tips to drivers. "Passing the hat" by the driver is discouraged.
- 3) It will be helpful if representatives from the carriers under consideration travel over the propose tour routes to make sure drivers and buses will not encounter any difficulties. Some companies may have restrictions on where buses can travel. Determine if air conditioners can be operated on dirt or gravel roads.
- 4) A cancellation clause, including the deadline for cancellation without penalty, is mandatory in all bus contracts.
- 5) Verify the carrier's insurance coverage (obtain a copy of the Certificate of Insurance).
- 6) Once the Convention registration deadline has passed (four weeks prior to the Convention), make a final determination of the correct number of buses to be reserved and the times they will be needed. This required coordination with the Registration and Tour committees. It is up to the Transportation Committee to make sure the carrier provides buses that meet standards for passenger comfort, convenience and safety, including clean and supplied restrooms, clean floors and windows, working air conditioners, and working public address systems. All buses should be non-smoking.
- 7) The Transportation Committee should arrange for the ready availability, if needed, of chase vehicles or emergency support vehicles with first aid equipment, coordinating with the Risk Management Committee. This is especially important on "high risk" tours, such as hiking tours.

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- 8) It is good practice to have a trial run with a bus on each planned tour route to determine the actual time needed for a tour and to identify any possible impediments to a successful tour.
- 9) The Transportation Committee works with the Tours and Food & Catering committees to coordinate several aspects of the tours, including the logistics of storing lunches, cold beverages and snacks in each bus, the availability of ice chests and ice, trash bags, paper towels, and other tour needs.

NOTE: Honorariums for tour guides are discouraged, although guides and drivers should receive complimentary food while on the tour.

Volunteers

OCTA is primarily a volunteer organization and the Convention is put on by volunteers. There may occasionally be a need for volunteers outside of the Convention Committee structure. The Volunteer Committee is responsible for the recruiting, training (as necessary) and placement of volunteers. The Committee identifies times and places where volunteers may be needed.

In many cases, individual committees are responsible for coordinating volunteers for their own activities (i.e., the Registration Committee will make sure volunteers are available to staff the Registration desk, the Raffle & Auction Committee will make sure it has volunteers to sell raffle tickets, etc.)

The Volunteer Committee should:

- 1) Coordinate with all other Convention committees to identify their needs.
- 2) Prepare a plan for how volunteers will be used, being as specific as possible, breaking it down to tasks and times, and identifying how many volunteers are needed for each task.
- 3) Recruit volunteers through various methods: meetings, sign-up sheets, publicity, and any other means available; good sources of volunteers may include local historical societies, service groups, schools, and the like.
- 4) Follow through with contact of those volunteering as soon as possible, and determine areas of interest, skills, and time availability.
- 5) Maintain accurate lists of volunteers, including contact information and volunteer preferences.
- 6) Communicate names of specific volunteers for specific committees to the committee chairs and keep a record of the contact.
- 7) As soon as feasible, get committee chairpersons to notify you of their needs for additional volunteers.
- 8) Whenever possible, prepare job descriptions for volunteers
- 9) As the Convention date approaches, provide training for volunteers (as needed) and stay in touch with committee chairs about their volunteer needs and assignments. Make sure volunteers know what their assignments are, when they will be needed, where to report and what is expected of them.
- 10) After the Convention, make sure volunteers are thanked appropriately.

Appreciating volunteers

It is important that volunteers know and are told – repeatedly! – that they are valuable to the organization and to the success of the Convention. A volunteer who is ignored or perceives indifference is not likely to volunteer again.

The Convention Chair and Committee Chairs should make it a point to recognize the value of volunteers at every level of the organization. Encourage them and show them they are appreciated! The worst thing you can do is overlook someone who has volunteered.

Evaluations

After your successful Convention, a formal evaluation process provides important information for future Convention organizers as it helps identify strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation will be both informal and quantitative.

Quantitatively, Convention attendees should be asked to evaluate their experience. Evaluation forms should be made available on Friday and Saturday that can be filled out by convention-goers. A place to turn them in upon completion should be clearly indicated.

The Convention Committee should meet soon after the dust has settled (within 30 days after the Convention) and hold a frank discussion of what went right and what didn't go so well. It can include comments heard in informal discussions with attendees, first-hand observations by Committee members and other considerations. A written report of the meeting should be prepared.

The evaluation forms should cover each part of the Convention, including speakers, tours, social events and facilities. Typically, the form asks for input on a one-to-five scale, with one being excellent and five being poor. An N/A (not applicable) option should also be included.

Evaluation opportunities may include: the general meeting, all speakers (rated individually), tours (rated individually), dinners, social events, facilities and meals. It should also include organizational information, such as registration and overall management. A space for general comments should be included. Names of those filling out the evaluations are not required, but it is always useful to know how many Conventions the respondent has attended. (For a sample of previous evaluation forms, please contact Headquarters.)

Once the evaluations are tabulated, the Convention chair should prepare a report for the Association Manager that also includes qualitative information gleaned from the Convention committee's discussions. This report should be submitted no later than two months after the end of the Convention.

See **Appendix B** for a sample Evaluation Form.

Appendix A – Financial Considerations

General

Based on a survey of OCTA members taken in 2007, location and trail attractions were the most often-cited reasons for attending a Convention. Cost was the major decision factor for only 16 percent of those surveyed. The Convention Committee should strive to keep costs reasonable and in line with similar events.

Registration Fees

OCTA’s registration fees historically are based on Individual registrations and Family registrations (two or more people sharing the same address). Local Convention organizers have considerable latitude in setting registration fees, in consultation with the Association Manager and OCTA President.

Here are Individual and Family registration fees for the most recent OCTA Conventions:

2005	Salt Lake City	\$50 & \$70
2006	St. Joseph	\$50 & \$70
2007	Gering/Scottsbluff	\$50 & \$70
2008	Nampa	\$55 & \$75
2009	Loveland	\$60 & \$90

Most recently, OCTA has not charged an additional fee for non-members, although this should be considered as a method of gaining new memberships and an incentive to join OCTA. (It was very successful at the Yuma Symposium held in January, 2009.) A non-member registration fee should be at least \$10 higher for individuals and \$15 higher for family registrations.

Comparatively, OCTA Convention registration fees are on the low side. In 2009, the Lewis & Clark Heritage Association charged a flat rate of \$350, which included meals and one tour; the Mormon History Association charged \$105 for members and \$145 for non members (plus meals and tours) for its 2009 annual meeting, with no family pricing; the Santa Fe Trails Association had a variable pricing structure, with conference registration ranging from \$80 (with a one-year membership) to \$45 (early bird) and tours priced at \$40 per person; the Western History Association charged \$82 to \$90 for members and \$125 to \$135 for non-members, \$32 to \$45 for meals, and \$64 to \$69 for tours; the American Association for State and Local History charged \$210 to \$275 for members and \$310 to \$375 for non-members.

The National Scenic and Historic Trails Conference sponsored by the Partnership for the National Trails System charged \$365 for registration, including meals but not including field trips. However, most who attend the Partnership conference are there on behalf of government agencies or non-profit “advocacy” groups and not individuals responsible for their own expenses.

Complimentary Registrations

Complimentary registrations should be discouraged (as should complimentary meals), but may be considered for speakers and/or sponsors, entertainers, workshop leaders and a few others in lieu of honorariums.

Occasionally the question is asked about complimentary registration for the Convention committee. OCTA has always been a volunteer organization. Making an exception for those who work on the Convention means you will have to explain to the many other volunteers who give their time to the trails – ranging from Board members, chapter officers, those who mark trails, and chapter volunteers – why they have to pay but the local committee does not.

Another question concerns whether those who want only to participate in tours should also pay a daily registration fee. This practice should be discouraged, but can be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Convention Chair in consultation with the Association Manager.

Chapter Proceeds

The sponsoring Chapter earns 50 percent of the proceeds of any raffle or auction (silent or live) held during the Convention. Any other arrangement must be approved by the OCTA Board of Directors. Proceeds from the raffle, silent auction and live auction are deposited to the OCTA Convention account and remitted to the Chapter when final accounts are settled.

Chapters also retain all proceeds from products or souvenirs they develop for sale at the Convention, such as tee-shirts, hats, pins, etc. Proceeds from souvenir sales are retained by the Chapter. Souvenir and product sales are optional.

Late Registration/Refund Policy

Registrations received after a published deadline (typically four weeks prior to the first day of the Convention) are charged an additional late registration fee.

Requests for refunds received prior to the registration deadline are honored in full. For requests received within one month of the Convention, only the cost of meals, plus 50 percent of bus tour fees is be refunded. Within one week of the Convention, there are no refunds except for cases of extreme hardship (medical, death in the family, etc.) with a written explanation of the hardship. Headquarters is the final decision-maker in cases of hardship.

Meals

Recent history has shown that about 60 percent of Convention attendees buy tickets for meals. For budgeting purposes, estimate similar participation. For instance, if you expect 400 registered attendees, you can expect 240 to buy tickets for meals. This is also a good number to use in planning for non-ticketed events, such as the Opening Night reception. Because profit margins on meals can be very narrow, keep complimentary meals to a minimum. You can

expect that “sit-down” meals to be the most expensive, followed by hot buffet meals and cold (sandwiches) buffets.

Tours

For budgeting purposes, base tour participation on between 1.0 and 1.4 tours per attendee (based on convention history since 2002; the average has been 1.25). Tours should be priced for profitability. Bus rental costs will be variable, influenced by factors such as availability in the Convention community, fuel prices and food costs. Costs for meals and snacks should also be considered. For the past several years, bus tour prices have ranged from \$55 to \$65 per person.

Meeting Room Expenses

When a Convention is held in a host hotel, the hotel may waive meeting room expenses with a guarantee of a certain number of room nights. In some venues, the local convention authority may waive most or all expenses for use of its facilities because of the number of room rentals OCTA provides in the area. These options should be explored in detail by local Convention organizers

Convention Accounting

Accounting for Convention expenses and revenues is a major consideration. Day-to-day responsibility lies with the Convention Treasurer, who operates within budget guidelines established and approved by the Convention Chair, the Association Manager and the OCTA Board of Directors.

Following are some of the procedural guidelines that should be followed:

1. Bank Account: A special Convention account will be opened by OCTA National Headquarters, at a local bank selected by Headquarters and the local Finance Chair/Treasurer. The account will be closed after all Convention records are reconciled. Checks on the account may include a local address reflecting the Convention location. Bank statements will be received at OCTA Headquarters and copies distributed to the local Convention Treasurer.
2. Signatories: The Convention Committee will delegate two individuals as signatories on the account (typically the Convention Treasurer and the Convention Chair). OCTA Headquarters will designate one person as a signatory (typically the Headquarters Manager).
3. Deposits: All fees and donations received are deposited to OCTA’s general account. This includes: Registration and activity fees, grants and cash donations, and all other fees.

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4. Advances: The Convention account is funded with advances adequate to meet anticipated pre-Convention, pre-registration expenses, in an amount determined jointly by the Convention Chair and the Association Manager. Additional funds may be transferred to the Convention account on an “as needed” basis, with the approval of the Association Manager.
5. Payments: Most budgeted expenses are paid by OCTA Headquarters, following established payable procedures. Some minor budgeted expenses may be paid from the Convention Account by the local committee, with the joint approval of the Convention Chair and the Association Manager. No payments in any instance will be made without an appropriate receipt or invoice.
6. Billing: The Convention Committee will ask local vendors to invoice OCTA rather than require payment C.O.D. or via credit card. The OCTA Headquarters Manager will provide purchase orders for goods and services and complete appropriate credit applications whenever necessary. Invoices will be paid promptly within established payable procedures.
7. Chart of Accounts: Immediately after a Convention is officially awarded, OCTA Headquarters will provide the Convention Chair and Finance Chair/Treasurer with a chart of accounts for coding income and expenses by activity.

Appendix B – Evaluation Form (sample)

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAIL ASSOCIATION CONVENTION EVALUATION

Post Office Box 1019 Independence MO 64051-0519 Phone (816) 252-2270 FAX 816836988

As part of our continuing effort to improve the quality of our National Conventions, we ask that you evaluate your Convention experience. Your responses will be read and very helpful in helping us to plan future Conventions. Please be honest in your evaluations. There is no need to sign your name.

In assessing each part of the convention program, speaker, guide, etc., you will be considering many things: Was the course contents, appropriate, worthwhile? Were the speakers/guides interesting, organized, stimulating? Did they enhance your own learning?

Please give each section an overall rating (by circling a number) in the categories given below. If you wish to elaborate, there is space for comments.

Please answer the Yes/No questions by circling your response.

Key: 1=Excellent, 2=Very Good, 3=Good, 4=Fair, 5=Poor, 0=N/A

1) Pre-convention tour Name of choice _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
2) Board Meeting:	1	2	3	4	5	0
3) General Meeting	1	2	3	4	5	0
4) Welcoming	1	2	3	4	5	0
5) Keynote Speaker content	1	2	3	4	5	0
6) Workshop, Name _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
7) Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	0
8) Social Get-to-gather	1	2	3	4	5	0
9) Tour you chose _____						
Guide's narration/instructions	1	2	3	4	5	0
Area Covered	1	2	3	4	5	0
10) Tour you chose _____						
Guide's narration/instructions	1	2	3	4	5	0
Area Covered	1	2	3	4	5	0
11) Speaker One - _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
Content	1	2	3	4	5	0
Speaker Two - _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
Content	1	2	3	4	5	0
Speaker Three - _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
Content	1	2	3	4	5	0
Speaker Four - _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
Content	1	2	3	4	5	0
Speaker Five - _____	1	2	3	4	5	0
Content	1	2	3	4	5	0
12) Awards Dinner	1	2	3	4	5	0
13) Bar-be-cue Dinner	1	2	3	4	5	0

PLEASE TURN PAGE OVER TO CONTINUE

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Organization

- A Was the pre-convention information/registration packet that was mailed to you
 a Accurate as to what actually occurred? Yes No
 b Stated clearly what to expect? Yes No
 c Was there something(s) we should have made more clear? Yes No
 If yes, please explain below.
- B Was the Registration well managed and helpful? Yes No
- C Was the Orientation well planned, effective? Yes No
- D Was the total program timely and managed effectively? Yes No
- E Were local OCTA hosts able to help to your satisfaction? Yes No
- F Were other staff courteous and helpful? Yes No

Comments on questions A-F, as well as other facets of organization and staff.

Facilities

Were facilities generally acceptable to what you expected? Yes No

Meals

Please rate box lunches served on tours	1	2	3	4	5	0
Awards Banquet	1	2	3	4	5	0
Bar-be-cue	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments not covered above

How many OCTA Conventions have you attended? First 1-5 5-10 10+

Would you recommend an OCTA convention to a friend? Yes No If No, why not?

Please recycle your name tag, it will help next year's convention save costs

SAFE JOURNEY HOME

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

Appendix C–Acknowledgement of Risk

Waivers of liability are no longer required or expected because of difficulty of enforcing such Waivers as a practical matter.

At its August, 2009 meeting, the OCTA Board of Directors asked for development of an Acknowledgement of Risk form, similar to that used by the National Park Service. That form should be available following the Mid-Year Board Meeting in March, 2010.

Meanwhile, a sample form can be viewed and at http://www.nps.gov/acad/parkmgmt/upload/risk_sample.pdf