WCN Conference Planning Guide

I. <u>Conference Date Selection</u>:
- The WCN conference is held annually Monday through Thursday in June after Shavuot. An annual Board dinner and meeting is held the preceding Sunday.
- Exact conference dates are selected with input from the WCN Board. Avoid potential conflicts (ACC/GTM, CA, Hava Nashira, Fathers' Day, etc.)
- Conference dates are announced at the previous year's conference.

II. <u>Selection of Conference Co-Chairs</u>:
- Co-chairs will consist of one person from the host synagogue and another WCN member.
- One chair should have previous chair experience.
- One chair need not be local and will be selected under the advisement of the WCN Board.

III. <u>Forming a Conference Committee</u>:
- Begin planning right after the previous conference.
- Co-chairs should reach out to 6-10 WCN members for the following:
    o Selecting/negotiating rates/confirming the hotel
    o Selecting/negotiating costs/confirming the caterer
    o Handling online registration (computer knowledge)
    o Coordinating tefillah
    o Coordinating song share (limit presenters to 5 minutes)
    o Coordinating the shuk
    o Coordinating tech needs
    o Uploading and maintaining documents for presenters
- Initial meetings: determine conference theme, logo, workshops, presenters, evening programs, services, and song shares.
- Special Events V.P. should be present at meetings to function as liaison between the committee and the Board.
- Co-chairs will provide regular updates to the WCN Board President and the Executive Board.

IV. <u>Developing Programming and Workshops</u>:
- Consider physical mobility issues for outside events.
- Decide between concurrent versus single workshops.
    o Keynote addresses in the morning and concurrent sessions in the afternoon
    o Concurrent sessions should not exceed 2 or 3. Presenters may repeat if desired
- Choose, contact and confirm presenters.
    o Get bios and workshop description prior to live registration
    o Choose WCN members as presenters when possible. Thank them with a note and a small gift

- o Typical honorarium for non-WCN members is $200 + meal if needed. **Additional funds and contracts, if requested, must be approved by the Treasurer**
  - o Confirm all presenter dates and times via email
- Confirm presenters' needs:
  - o Presentation space
  - o Audio/video requirements
  - o Computer access
  - o Music stands, mic stands or wireless, etc.
  - o **Presenters to provide materials (PDF) for attendees prior to the conference to be included in a Google drive**
- Create schedule:
  - o Do not over-program; allow down time
  - o Ensure prompt start and end times
  - o Decide which programs will be offered virtually

V. Services (Tefillot):
- Members chosen to lead via registration form.
- Include new members.
- Services to reflect all movements: Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal.
  - o Borrow siddurim from neighboring synagogues as needed
- Services options:
  - o Monday: Maariv (30 min.) led by conference team
  - o Tuesday: Shacharit (45 min.)
             Mincha or Maariv (30 min.)
  - o Wednesday: Shacharit (45 min.)
             Mincha or Maariv (30 min.)
  - o Thursday: Shacharit including Torah service (75 min.)
- Shacharit services begin between 9:00-9:30am.
- Include weekday nusach.
- Invite rabbi from the host synagogue to deliver a **brief** d'var Torah.

VI. Evening Programs:
- Conference "kick-off" Monday night – requirements:
  - o Opening reception and ice breaker
  - o Dinner
  - o Maariv
- Song share/kumsitz/other activity at synagogue or hotel.
- Possible evening events:
  - o Concerts/Performances
    - o WCN members or outside artists
    - o Outside venues
- Evening programs typically end by 9:30pm.

- o   Late-ending evening programs should have next day, late-start Shacharit service

VII.   <u>Annual Meeting:</u>
- Wednesday lunch (90 minutes) in person and interactive virtual.

VIII.   <u>Conference Registration:</u>
- All programs need to be finalized.
- Deadline for online registration and schedule (including virtual) posted by March 1st.
- Registration information must include links:
    - o   Address of host synagogue (map link)
    - o   Hotel information (room rate, link to room registration and deadlines)
    - o   Transportation options (airport, railroad, ground transportation)
- Online registration template available through WCN Website Coordinator - currently Star Wahnon.
- Consult the Website Coordinator to determine best upload format.
- Provide information to Website Coordinator for the following:
    - o   Shuk pricing for members and non-members
    - o   Additional registration for special programs
- Registration homepage displays deadlines:
    - o   Early Bird registration: midnight, April 30th
    - o   Scholarship application: midnight, April 30th
    - o   Regular registration: midnight, 18 days prior to conference start date
    - o   Virtual-Only registration: 7 days prior to conference start date
    - o   Hotel: early registration ensures conference room rate
- Registration form includes the following:
    - o   food sensitivities
    - o   transportation needs to/from hotel
    - o   "first timer" status and buddy option (in-person only)
- **Registration homepage should include a reminder for members to update their website email and cellphone.**

IX.   <u>Hotel:</u>
- The co-chairs will find a hotel. Consider the following:
    - o   Proximity to the synagogue
    - o   Group rate for block of minimum 40 rooms with single/ double occupancy
    - o   Free breakfast
    - o   Meeting room for party/activity (to be included in negotiation)
- Contract to be approved by the Treasurer.

X.   <u>Meals:</u>
- Meals to be kosher or kosher style – no mixing of meat and milk.
    - o   Ensure sufficient vegetarian fare with alternate protein sources

- o Provide gluten free, dairy free and vegan options
- o Clearly label all buffet items
- o **Provide signage requesting that those without food sensitivities avoid eating items specifically meant for those who follow special diets**
- Be sure menus are varied.
- Water/coffee/tea/fresh fruit and a variety of savory/sweet snacks to be available all day.
  - o Enlist volunteers to ensure snacks are always available and replenished
  - o Include gluten free, dairy free, and vegan snacks
- Be eco-friendly and limit paper and plastic products.

XI. <u>Promoting Conference Registration:</u>
- Co-chairs should communicate frequently via the listserv.
  - o Do a weekly "tease" 2-3 weeks before registration goes "live"
  - o Announce on the date it goes "live"
  - o Promote weekly - be creative (slides, videos, song parodies)
  - o Post deadline reminders (Early Bird, scholarship, etc.)

XII. <u>Publicity in the Host Community</u>:
- Enlist volunteers and encourage attendance at tefillah.

XIII. <u>Technology:</u>
- Virtual attendance is offered for some workshops, key programming (commissioned song, Pat Rudden lecturers, song share, keynote speakers) and all tefillah.
  - o Ensure **effective** synagogue streaming capabilities
  - o Hire or enlist a competent tech person to handle streaming and be present throughout the conference

XIV. <u>Security:</u>
- Top priority.
- Consider cost of full-time security when developing budget.
- Contact local police to inform them of conference.
- Ensure synagogue is secured while attendees are present.

XV. <u>Photography:</u>
- Designate at least two people as official photographers to ensure all events are documented.

XVI. <u>On-Site Check-In of Attendees</u>:
- Attendees check in upon arrival on the first day.
- Committee and WCN Board members should welcome and assist at check-in.
  - o Buddy coordinator should facilitate introductions
- Upon check-in, attendees receive:

- o Name tag with label to include home city, first-timer status, Board members, committee members, etc.
- o Schedule
- o Optional: small pad, pen, small gift

XVII. <u>Vendors:</u>
- - Designate vendor area with times for shopping.
- - Ensure sufficient number of tables.
- - Vendors are charged a table fee at registration.

XVIII. <u>Tzedakah Project:</u>
- - Committee chooses a project/organization.
    - o Vendors' fees are donated
    - o Additional funds may be donated by members or the WCN treasury
- - Inform attendees of the project at the annual meeting.

XIX. <u>Budget:</u>
- - Develop the budget based on the following:
    - o Cost of food, programming fees/honoraria/gifts for presenters and attendees
    - o Technology fees
    - o Personnel costs (security, tech person, custodial, etc.)
    - o Administrative costs (paper, nametags, etc.)
    - o Evening programming or entertainment (e.g. tips for bus drivers)
    - o Solicit local Jewish community foundations/federations for additional grant funding
    - o Expected number of attendees
- - Factor in at least 5 percent contingency for unforeseen costs.
- - Submit budget to WCN Treasurer for approval by February 1.
    - o Consult with Treasurer about unusual expenses
    - o Determine registration fees in consultation with Treasurer
    - o **Do not sign or make any verbal contracts that require a monetary exchange between WCN and an outside vendor or person. This includes hotel contracts, caterer, outside vendors and presenters. Only the Treasurer has authority to sign such a contract**