

NPRHA CONVENTION PLANNING GUIDE

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1 Convention Purposes and Philosophy

1.1 *Implementation*

The attached document, “NPRHA Convention Planning Guide”, is offered to assist each Convention Chair in the design, planning, execution, and completion of the Annual Convention. It is based largely on the experiences of past Convention Chairs, primarily as an outline, or set of reminders, of the many facets of convention planning which can contribute to a successful event. However it should not preclude adaptation and innovation. A copy of this Guide should be presented by the Convention Chair to each member of the Convention Team, with respective responsibilities highlighted.

This latest revision was modified following the 2006 Convention in Bozeman, which was an excellent example of the Chair having closely followed the Guide. It should continue to be reviewed and revised appropriately following each annual convention. This will allow for ‘lessons learned’ and result in even better conventions in the future.

Outlined below are suggestions and considerations for planning and conducting the NPRHA annual convention. These should be considered as guidelines and as lessons based on past experiences; not as “musts”, and not as precluding adaptation and innovation.

1.2 *Authority*

As stated in the NPRHA By-Laws, revised July 13, 2002, Article V, Section 8, (Convention Committee):

“The Convention Committee organizes and conducts the Annual Convention of the Association, subject to the advice and approval of the Board of Directors. The Convention Chairperson or Co-chairpersons are appointed by the Board of Directors. The responsibilities of the Convention Committee are as follows:

- A. To select, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, a time and place for the Annual Convention;
- B. To plan and make all necessary arrangements for the facilities, program and supporting services and activities for the Annual Convention;
- C. To handle all expenditures and receipts of moneys related to the Annual Convention in accordance with the budget approved therefore and to submit a full accounting of such expenditures and receipts, along with all related invoices, receipts and similar documentation, to the Treasurer of the Association, along with all residual funds, within ninety days of the close of the Convention;
- D. To prepare and submit a report of the Convention to the Board of Directors within ninety days of the close of the Convention to assist in the planning and conduct of future such conventions; and
- E. To carry out such other duties as the President or the Board of Directors may from time to time assign.”

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1.3 Purpose

The annual convention is a critical activity of the NPRHA. It combines business, educational and social functions. It is the only scheduled opportunity for all members to meet each other face-to-face, to hear about Association activities and plans, and to provide guidance and feedback to the Board and the various Committees. The convention also provides a once-a-year chance for many related activities, such as seeing a portion of the former NP, having a swap meet, participating in a model or photo contest, etc. **The convention is also an important fund-raising event for the NPRHA; however, the fund-raising should be the result of voluntary contributions, only.**

The annual convention should be planned with all of its purposes in mind, so that all essential elements are provided for and are kept in balance. It should be designed so that essential activities are accomplished and so that participants (and their non-participant family members) have fun, feel it was worthwhile, and want to return next year. It might be helpful to think of the Convention as a very large family reunion.

One of the most important functions of the Convention Chair is to establish and maintain good two-way communications with all of the various members of the Team, including those whose responsibilities are ancillary to the many basic functions.

2 Convention Location (City/Town)

The NPRHA Board of Directors selects the convention locations for the coming four-to five-year period. This allows for ample lead time for selecting and contracting for convention facilities, for coordinating sites to be in the same region as the Great Northern RHS annual meeting, for choosing a convention chairperson, and for members to schedule their attendance.

The convention locations are at sites relevant to the NP. The sites are varied and are selected so as to provide even geographic distribution over time between locations on the east end, west end, and central areas of the former NP territory. This permits members in different regions equal chance to participate and gives members opportunity to see different NP-related locations.

Some locations provide a wealth of potential activities and resources. Others offer much less. In the latter case, more activities and “special events” may need to be planned and brought in from outside of the location. Members coming from a distance should be reminded of the opportunities for sightseeing in the area, keeping in mind the origins of the NPR.

Although different locations may vary considerably in opportunities for non-railroad, family activities, this is not a major consideration in selecting convention sites. More members may be encouraged to attend if one activity per day is planned for family members. These should not, however, interfere with “shopping time”.

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3 Convention Chair (and Co-Chair, if desired)

It is preferable, but not essential, that the convention chairperson be located in or near the town or city where the convention is to be held. However, it is important that the chairperson be selected by the Board at least two years in advance of the convention date. It is desirable, but not essential, to have a co-chair, selected by the chairperson, to assist in organizing the convention and to serve as a back-up to the chairperson. Serving as Co-Chair or Assistant Chair provides an excellent opportunity for a Chair-designate to obtain valuable expertise and insight.

Program design: A well-planned convention program includes activities and sessions covering key areas of interest among attendees. The program is the primary activity of the convention. Each convention site offers unique program opportunities that can be exploited. These include NP veterans or other special individuals, tours, train rides, historical events, etc. At the same time, there needs to be ample opportunity for members to interact informally, explore common interests, make new friends, etc., so don't fill up every available hour with long presentation sessions, slide shows or daylong bus rides. It may be useful to evaluate program options in terms of information flow and member interactions per minute. Also, avoid or minimize schedule conflicts, such as having swap meet set-up or company store sales periods while presentation sessions are in progress. Thank-you's should be sent to those not on the Committee, who have contributed their time and/or resources.

Important - The NPRHA Board of Directors has final approval authority over the convention plan, budget, and fund-raising objectives.

The primary responsibilities of the chairperson are to:

- A. Begin planning and organizing one year in advance of the convention
- B. Establish and maintain over-all coordination/two-way communication between committees.
- C. Recruit, organize and direct the convention committee (most of the actual work of preparing for the convention and putting it on should be done by various committees or individuals under the guidance of the chairperson - See Appendix A).
- D. Delegate tasks without losing control. Use this planning guide as a checklist.
- E. Prepare and maintain a master schedule. Note – It now appears preferable to schedule the Convention program to begin at Wednesday noon, and conclude with the Saturday evening banquet, except for the second BOD meeting on Sunday morning.

3.1 Convention Schedule

A convention schedule should provide the following:

- Wednesday morning – BOD Meeting and Registration (open through Friday).
- Wednesday afternoon/evening – Opening Program, presentations and clinics.
- Thursday- Program presentations and clinics, tours, and model contest.
- Thursday evening – Program presentations, clinics, 'open projector'.
- Friday – Program presentations and clinics, tours, 'open projector'.
- Friday evening or Saturday - Veteran's panel or other veteran-related event.
- Saturday - Tours, Swap Meet, Membership Meeting.
- Saturday evening - Banquet, guest speaker, and raffle
- Sunday morning – Meeting of the (new) BOD to elect officers and conclude any unfinished business.

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- Sunday afternoon – Optional local site and/or model layout visits. All other planned activities should end with the Banquet, or by noon Sunday at the latest, to facilitate travel.
- Site Selection (Hotel or Meeting Center)

3.2 *Convention Site*

The conference site is an important factor in the success of the meetings. It needs adequate rooms to house participants and suitable rooms for various functions. It must be air-conditioned, clean and comfortable, but need not be “deluxe.” If rooms charges are high or the number of rooms on-site are limited, then alternate places to stay should be available near-by, and advertised to the attendees in advance, as required. See Section 5.

Every consideration should be given to minimizing the built-in, fixed charges to the attendees. Room charges in the area of \$75-120 per day are a reasonable range for the convention headquarters hotel. Since some attendees may want to arrive early or stay after the convention, negotiate with the hotel to obtain the convention room rate for a few days before and after the scheduled meeting dates. All in all, the combined cost of registration and hotel room during the convention should not exceed \$450-500 per attendee. Additional fees for optional trips and activities are less of a deterrent to attendees than the fixed charges. Whenever possible, these optional fees should be publicized in advance.

College facilities may not be suitable due to lack of air-conditioning, privacy, and amenities. However, if alternative motel space is close by the meeting rooms, the use of college dormitory space and campus meeting rooms may be satisfactory, as a last resort.

When considering possible sites, find out what other conventions/activities may be taking place at the same time in the town or at the site to determine if they will interfere. At times, when we are meeting in their territory, the SP&SRHS will probably choose to co-locate their convention with ours. Care should be taken in coordination with them, so as to avoid conflicts with program segments that might be of interest to both groups. We should avoid having our members make a difficult choice not to attend our sessions.

Consider availability of long-distance and local public transportation, as well as requirements for the transportation of out-of-town conventioners to associated events.

Find out if any renovation/construction work is scheduled to take place during the time of the convention at the prospective site, and make plans to compensate for the inconveniences.

Find out what support services are available, such as photocopying, hotel shuttle bus, audio-visual equipment, etc.

Photocopying. Requirements may arise for making photocopies on short notice, such as for maps, handouts, etc. Determine where photocopies can be made quickly, easily, and at reasonable cost, singly or in quantity, both during the day and at night. Usually, the hotel will provide access to such equipment.

Coordination of support with hotel. Since many of the support requirements are tied to hotel facilities and personnel, establish working contacts with the hotel staff. Know who to contact for various needs and problems and know how to contact them on short notice.

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4 Room Requirements

Room requirements are as follows:

- A. One large meeting room for general sessions. It needs adequate ventilation, capable of being darkened for viewing slides and videos, a large projection screen, an installed sound system, and freedom from external noise. It should have seating for at least 200. Usually, an interior room is preferable. Inspect the room for lighting control, for ventilation, and for the sound system before signing a contract.
- B. There should be a minimum of two microphones available, one of which would preferably be wireless.
- C. One secure room for the Company Store. (In addition, there needs to be some place, preferably inside the hotel, where material shipped for the store can be received and stored securely prior to the convention).
- D. One secure room for model and photo contests.
- E. One large, secure room for the swap meet.
- F. Large hall for convention banquet, with tables for 250-300 people and tables for raffle prizes.
- G. 75 or more guest rooms for attendees.
- H. Meeting rooms should be in the same building, close to each other, and easy to find in order to avoid confusion, frustration, and loss of time in going from one activity to another.
- I. Based on some minimum number of registered guests and a banquet commitment, it often is possible to negotiate free use of meeting and activity rooms. For this reason, publicity information should not offer alternative places to stay, but they should be given only when specifically requested, or when available space in the convention hotel has been exhausted.
- J. Hotels will not normally guarantee security of material left in a room unless a guard is hired. This would be excessively expensive. The best alternative for the Company Store and Model Contest are rooms that can be locked when unattended during the Convention and that are adjacent to a space actively used by the NPRHA.

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5 Advance Publicity

Inform members and the public about the convention well in advance. This should include the following:

- A. Convention notices, including the Convention Registration Form (see Appendix 19C) should be posted as early as possible on the NPRHA WebSite (www.NPRHA.org), with links to the Company Store, allowing attendees to register and pay for their convention selection options, as well as the purchase of membership fees for non-members, non-attendee raffle tickets and requests for convention models, as they may be available. The Company Store will process these purchases and report periodically to the Convention Chair and Membership Chair, as appropriate.
- B. Mainstreeter Summer issue (or by September 1) - Notice of dates, city, and hotel, plus call for clinics; also notice of special model and/or photo contests (e.g., best caboose model; with special prize awarded)
- C. Mainstreeter Fall issue (or by December 1) - Notice of dates, city, and hotel, plus preliminary program highlights
- D. Mainstreeter Winter issue (or by March 1) - Registration and convention program/information enclosures; plus feature article related to the convention location. Consider adding extra pages if necessary. Include an insert with information about the raffle, including mail-order ticket sales, and entry forms.
- E. Establish a contact with a key person at the Great Northern Railway Historical Society one year in advance of the convention so that current and accurate information can be exchanged. This is because many persons are members of both the NP and the GN groups and attend both conventions. The same is applicable to the SP&SRHS.
- F. Send convention brochures and schedule information to railroad magazines and selected railroad historical societies by January 1 so that the information can be included in issues prior to the convention. Information should go to the following publications and organizations: Trains, Model Railroader, Railfan & Railroad, Railroad Model Craftsman, Mainline Modeler, NMRA Bulletin, Minnesota Transportation Museum Minnegazette, NMRA Regional newsletters (Midwest Region, Thousand Lakes Region 'Fusee', Rocky Mountain Region, Pacific Northwest Region), Great Northern Railway Historical Society, Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway Historical Society.
- G. Make a special effort to contact local NP veterans and invite them to the convention. Send a notice of the meeting to the BNSF with a request that an announcement be placed in the employee newsletter.
- H. Prepare and provide press releases about the convention for local newspapers. Consider inviting a member of the local press to attend the convention, gratis.
- I. Prepare and distribute convention information and program schedules to all hobby shops within 150 to 200 miles of the convention site. The information can be provided in forms such as a poster and flyers. The distribution of these to shops can be tied in with soliciting door prizes.
- J. Assign one person to be the contact person to provide advance information and to receive and respond to requests for information about the convention. Notify the Company Store Management of the contact person and the convention schedule as soon as possible.

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6 Budget and Attendee Fees

A detailed budget needs to be prepared for the convention, and should be presented to the BOD for their review and approval, by January 1. It should include:

- A. Projection of attendance.
- B. Estimate of costs, including:
 - a. Some of the costs include:
 - b. Postage and other costs for advance publicity.
 - c. Copying and mailing of convention information to NPRHA members
 - d. Registration packages.
 - e. Cost of meeting rooms not provided free by the hotel.
 - f. Signs in the hotel showing locations of activities.
 - g. Rental of audio-visual equipment.
 - h. Costs of slides or overhead transparencies and handouts for clinics and presentations.
 - i. Door prizes for spouses at the banquet (\$75.00 to \$100)
 - j. Rolls of tickets for the raffle.
 - k. Costs of meals provided to invited speakers and panelists.
 - l. A Contingency Fund in the amount of 10% of the above expenses.
- C. Registration fees. Set the registration fee high enough to cover projected expenses as well as some unexpected costs. The registration fee for non-members should include the NPRHA membership fee; the meetings are not open to non-members. The only exceptions are the member's immediate family, meaning spouse and any dependent children under 21, who are covered under the Member's registration fee. Use the Budget Format (Appendix 19B) to work out a reasonable figure, based on two or three estimates of likely attendance.
- D. Tour or trip costs and fees. Charges for tours or trips can be made as an additional expense for participants in these activities. However, for insurance reasons only NPRHA members (and immediate family) may participate. Any non-members who wish to go along must sign up as members and pay the membership fee in advance of the excursion. The fees charged should be designed, at a minimum, to cover the cost of the trip.
- E. Amount to be raised for the NPRHA from the raffle and other sources, above expenses. Target amounts should be in the range of \$2,000 from the raffle and \$2,500 to \$3,000 from Company Store Sales. However, fund-raising should not be at the expense of participant satisfaction and enjoyment. Don't "nickel and dime" attendees. Remember: fund-raising must be limited to voluntary spending.
- F. Contingency plans for such eventualities as lower-than-planned attendance, tour cancellation, etc. Know where to cut costs if necessary in order to safely meet projected expenses.
- G. A detailed, comprehensive record of Income and Expenses, including the tracking of checks received and deposited in the Convention account and checks written on the Convention account and disbursed, must be maintained throughout the project and included with the formal Convention Report, as required in the By-Laws. This report should be forwarded to the President, with a copy to the Treasurer. The sale of 'Convention Models' will be administered by the Modeling Committee, who should coordinate their offerings with the Convention Chair. Their budget will be administered separately from the Convention Budget.

Note: A suggested Convention Budget format and worksheet appears in Appendix 19B.

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7 Registration

Handling convention registrations is a major task, especially as the date of the meeting draws near. Mail and telephone inquiries may average 20 per week during the month prior to the convention. Expect to assign several people to registration activities alone, and communicate frequently via email with the Website coordinator for online registrations. In order to facilitate information-sharing with the web site, plan to run with a current-configuration Windows computer. Maintaining registration information on a spread sheet will, for example, enable last-minute printing of name tags at the convention site.

Advance registration (Pre-Convention) - It is very important that as registrations are received, postcard acknowledgements be sent by return mail. Many attendees depart from home as much as several weeks prior to the convention and would not receive late mailings. Mailing labels can be obtained from the magazine mailing list for use on postcards. In addition, a computerized, alphabetical list of registrants should be maintained, showing what activities (e.g., banquet, bus tour, swap meet table) each one has signed up for. A sample Registration Form appears on Appendix 19C.

Attending NP Veterans, who are not already members of NPRHA, might be offered free Trial Memberships, in order to encourage their continuing membership.

It will be useful to have attendees select banquet entree choices at the time they pre-register or register. In this case, the banquet tickets should indicate their choice.

Information packets with schedules, maps, coupons, handouts, name tags, etc. should be prepared in advance. Mailing labels from The Mainstreeter mailing list or printed out from the list of registrants can be used to label a packet for each registrant as registrations are received. Often a city will have a convention bureau that can help provide and organize materials. Items contained in the packet should include:

- Name badges for the registrant (and spouse/children if attending). The badges preferably should be computer-generated, using large type (first or nickname largest), and indicate prominently if the attendee is an NP Veteran, New Member, Speaker, Director, or Officer. The Convention Program, when folded, should fit into the name tag holder, along with excursion and banquet tickets.
- Convention program
- Excursion and banquet tickets, as appropriate
- List of convention registrants
- Forms to fill out for entering the model and photo contests (see Appendices 19D)
- Diagram of the hotel, showing location of meeting rooms, Company Store, etc.
- Map of the town, showing NP-related sites, buildings, equipment, etc.
- Written guide to the NP and its history in the area
- Directions for Tours/Rides planned for the Convention
- Directions to participating hobby shops, layouts open, etc.
- Information, brochures, etc. for non-convention, possible family activities
- Coupons for hobby shops, reduced admissions to tourist sites, etc.
- Special “give-away items” such as copies of NP timetables, NP forms, etc.
- If available, a number of state highway maps for those traveling after the convention
- Membership form, for members to use to enroll non-members. Extra copies should be available at the Registration Desk.
- Attendee Feedback Forms, to allow for comments and suggestions for future conventions, which should include instructions on how to pass them on.

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8 Hospitality

Convention registration - A registration table should be set up well before the convention begins to take registrations, make up name tags, hand out information packets, issue meal and tour tickets, answer questions, etc. The table also needs to be open early in the morning before the convention starts and through the second day. Some system for handling latecomers is also needed (e.g., a sign saying who to contact and where). A local convention bureau may be able to assist in setting up and running a registration table.

Attendee welcome - It is a nice touch to have one or more Board members or local committee members “on duty” to help welcome attendees as they arrive at the convention site.

Attendee list - Some members know others only by name, such as through correspondence. It is very helpful if a list of attendees, including membership category (Veteran, New Member, Speaker, Director, etc.) is provided either in the registration package or is available later in the first day at the registration table or at least on a display stand. This will help to promote the feeling of the ‘NPRHA Family’, and should include the names of all family members attending.

Message Board - It is desirable to have a message board at a central location for posting schedule changes, announcements, personal messages, “lost and found,” etc. It will be most easily found if it is located near the Registration area, from the start.

Guest speakers and panelists - Provide name badges and registration material to these individuals at no charge. There have been occasions where panelists did not come because they thought they had to pay the registration fee shown in the materials they were given.

New member enrollment - Persons who are not members of the NPRHA may show up wanting to attend sessions, visit the swap meet, go on tours, etc. This is an excellent opportunity to enroll new members. Membership forms should be provided at the registration table and arrangement made to give or send completed forms and dues payments to the membership chairperson.

Attendee feedback forms - Suggestions and comments from attendees can be an important source of feedback about the NPRHA and the convention. Include a feedback form in the registration package and provide a mechanism for collecting completed forms.

Tour/train ride planning and scheduling including: buses or vans, tickets, guides, boarding lists, handouts, and communications equipment, as well as consideration for passenger safety and adequate insurance.

Spouse/family activities options – (This is one area where the addition of a Hospitality Chair can be most useful.) Many convention attendees are accompanied by spouses or other family members who prefer some activities other than the regular program. A full alternate program is not required, but at least one event per day is strongly recommended. Information about optional activities, such as playgrounds, museums, shopping, local attractions, etc., along with suitable maps and directions, should be included in the registration package.

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9 Program Sessions

The perceived success of many conventions has been often tied to the high quality of the presentations. Attendees often prefer to learn of NP-related subjects concerning the local area, as well as how the NP operated in the area.

Get commitments from presenters early enough to allow them to fully research their subject, and find enough photos to adequately illustrate their points. Also, suggest to the presenters that the editors of The Mainstreeter may be interested in publishing an article based on the presentation.

Program schedule - Here are some suggestions:

- A. A good starting time is 9 a.m. This allows people to register before the program starts and avoids losing program time. Every effort should be made to have each session start on schedule, beginning with the first.
- B. Generally, sessions might be scheduled to be 25-30 minutes for short topics and 50-60 minutes for longer ones. It is a good idea to schedule 10 minutes between sessions to allow for such things as audiovisual set-up, rest room breaks, etc.
- C. It works very well to have the Program Chair host each meeting program, introducing the speakers and making any necessary comments about timing, breaks, resumption of the session, etc.
- D. The Conference Chairperson can open the formal program by welcoming participants, outlining the agenda, covering any administrative items, location of meeting rooms, rest rooms, fire exits, etc. and introducing the NPRHA President (not all attendees know who the President is). The President should welcome the group to the convention, introduce the other officers, and invite ideas, suggestions, etc. during the convention.
- E. The opening session might be an illustrated presentation about the local area and its NP history, including location of any remaining structures, equipment on display, etc.
- F. Schedule other slide/video presentations for afternoon or evening sessions when members may want the option to do other things. Some members may have already seen the slides/videos or may be able to see them later. In any case, these should be restricted to NP-related subject matter.
- G. When possible, there should be at least one presentation or panel of NP veterans talking about their experiences. This session needs a moderator to ask questions, assist the veterans, clarify audience questions, etc. It is probably best if this session is held in the evening on a non-banquet night. It is a nice touch to invite the panel members to have dinner with NPRHA Board members prior to the panel session, with the NPRHA paying for the panelists' meals. After the session, recognize the panelists with small gifts, such as one-year's free membership in NPRHA. Panelists should be invited to attend any sessions or activities of interest to them. Be sure that they understand that do not need to pay registration fees.
- H. There should be several clinics for NP modelers.
- I. There should be at least one session related to collecting/preserving NP history or artifacts.
- J. One "event" at several of the previous conventions has been a ten-question, informal, self-scored quiz about things NP, with a prize for the most right answers. This can be used as a 20-minute fill-in session or something that can be deleted if other sessions run late.
- K. Have two or three "emergency back-up" sessions prepared (e.g., one long one and one short one) to use if a scheduled presenter withdraws, doesn't show up, etc.
- L. Some program activities can be done outside of the regular meeting agenda. Examples might include model layout tours or visiting special exhibits.

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10 Presenters

Selection of presenters. Pick people who are knowledgeable on the selected subjects and who can give a good presentation. Check with them several times during the months preceding the convention to ensure that they are getting prepared, to let them know that their participation is important, and to determine if they have any unmet needs for information, material or other support. These follow-up contacts will help prompt them to get ready and will help alert you if a problem is developing. Offer to meet with the presenters individually in advance to “dry run” their presentations. Another way of doing a “dry run” is for them to give the presentation to a local group prior to the convention. It is highly desirable to have the presenter submit a “final draft” of the text to the program chair in advance of the convention. This will help to assure the presenter’s readiness.

Instructions to presenters. Be sure that you have an understanding in advance with the presenters as to what they will cover and how much time they have for their part of the program. Stress that only NP-related material is to be included in their presentation. Tell them how the session will be run and who will be keeping time for them and helping to facilitate questions-and-answer periods. Again, it is highly desirable for each presenter to bring a copy of the presentation, suitable for reproduction, so that copies can be made available to the audience following the talk.

Logistic support requirements. Arrange for someone to meet and greet all presenters on their arrival at the convention site. Determine what support, such as video display, slide projector, overhead projector, laser pointer, handout copying, etc., each presenter requires and have it available. Each presenter using visual aids should be given an opportunity to test the equipment well in advance of the presentation. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed by the NPRHA. However, no speaker fees should be paid.

Session chairs. Each session should have a moderator/chairperson present to start the session, introduce the presenter, keep things moving on schedule, help on equipment problems, facilitate questions, etc.

Taping of presentations. Selected parts of the convention should be taped for future use, especially the veterans’ panel. However, it is essential that permission be obtained from presenters before doing this. In some cases, taping of a session may inhibit the speakers from being as forthright as they might be. Video recording is usually preferred, but is more difficult to accomplish due to such factors as lighting requirements, audience members walking in front of the camera, and use of slide or overhead projectors in some presentations.

Contingencies. To avoid last-minute problems occasioned by illness or travel problems causing speakers to be delayed or unable to attend altogether, it would be prudent to have a presentation, of high quality, available to be scheduled on very short notice. This could consist of a slide show, a modeling talk, or an historical dissertation by a well-prepared member. If not needed for such a contingency, it would be appropriate to give full recognition for the speaker, with time allotted during off-hours, if possible, for optional attendance. The inevitable aging of our veterans might also make such advance planning advisable.

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11 Meeting Site Logistics

Meeting rooms should be obtained to meet the following needs:

“Casual meeting” area. An important aspect of NPRHA conventions is the opportunity for members to meet each other and to make new friends on an informal basis. It is highly desirable to have some place, preferably near a “high traffic” area, where convention attendees can sit, have coffee or other refreshments, be comfortable, and have chance or planned encounters with each other at any time during the convention. This could be in a part of the lobby, a nearby meeting room, or a section of a coffee shop, and can be designated by an NP Monad poster. This will discourage noisy interruptions of the programs by people chatting in the back of the room.

Program session rooms. Rooms should be quiet, comfortable, and conveniently located. They should be easy to find and to enter or exit. Chairs need to be comfortable and not squeezed in too tightly. Some means may be needed for hanging pictures, maps, etc. on the walls. Electric outlets should be conveniently located for audio-visual and recording equipment. Chairs, a podium with a light, and a table to two should be provided up front for presenters to use. A clock should be provided for the presenters to see. This is one item rarely found in hotel meeting rooms. It could be in the back of the room or on the podium.

Environmental controls. Means for controlling light, temperature, and noise are essential for a good meeting room. Controls should be easy to find and use. Designate someone for each session to be in charge of these controls, and assure their familiarity with them. It is preferable to retain a low lighting level in the room for safety and for making notes. Avoid outside rooms which cannot be blacked out or in which blackout curtains interfere with good ventilation. Easily controlled air conditioning is essential. Fully occupied rooms can become very warm and stuffy without good air circulation.

Noise control is primarily a matter function of room location, sound proofing in the construction and furnishings of the room, and avoidance of noise sources outside the room, such as loud meetings in adjacent rooms, nearby play or swimming areas, discos, construction work, etc.

Signs. To help attendees find their way around, provide signs to directing them to the various convention activities. Putting the NP Monad on each sign is a nice touch that also can be recognized at a longer distance than words alone. If the site has a marquee, ask to have the convention publicized on the marquee. In addition, place a sign in the lobby or near the registration desk with the day’s schedule of events. This will help attendees and provides a place to post last-minute changes.

Audio-visual equipment. Determine what equipment is needed for each session. An electronic image projector, connected to a suitable laptop, is now the medium of choice. Also, good quality slide projectors, overhead projectors, projection screens, and video playback equipment should be provided as required. If hotel-furnished equipment is in poor condition it may be necessary to rent equipment. Always have spare bulbs on hand for projectors and know how to change them.

Communication systems. A good audio system is essential for presentations in a large room. It needs to be checked out in advance of use to set volume levels, to know where controls are, how to handle feedback squeals, etc. For panel sessions with more than two people, multiple microphones should be provided.

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12 Banquet

Banquet planning. The banquet is a major social event for the NPRHA. Be creative in making it a special occasion, perhaps by having some theme or surprise event. Consider having NP-related decorations in the room. Reserve tables at the front of the room for NPRHA Board members, Raffle group leaders, and the guest speaker and invited dignitaries or special guests. The schedule should include a “social hour” prior to the meal, time for selling raffle tickets, the dinner, announcement of contest winners, guest speaker or entertainment, final sale of raffle tickets, and drawings for the secondary and grand prizes in the raffle.

Menu selection. Usually a hotel will offer several menu selections. A good plan is to have a choice of two basic entrees, such as a choice of meat or fish, and a vegetarian option. Those signing up for the banquet should indicate their entree preference and any special dietary requirements when they register.

Service. The meal can be served at the tables or can be a buffet. Keep in mind, however, that it takes some time for everyone to go through a buffet line. At one convention each table was given a number and tables were called to the buffet line in turn, using a dining car chime and announcement by a ‘dining car steward’.

Banquet/catering arrangements. From the beginning of discussions with the host hotel, consideration must be given to the following details: number of servers to be dedicated to the NP banquet (perhaps best defined by the amount of time required to serve the meal to the expected number of guests); hours for bar service, number of bar locations and bartenders provided, and whether the bar will be open during and/or after the meal; whether the servers will be allowed to clear off the tables immediately following the meal; control of room lighting and suppression of the sound system during the meal and program; and provisions for any required projection equipment.

Banquet program/entertainment. Some special presentation, talk, or NP-related entertainment should be provided before or after the meal. The time limit for a speaker should be 30 minutes for the prepared presentation and 15 minutes for questions and answers. The speaker should be instructed to exclude any non-NP-relevant material and to not over-run the schedule. Coordinate the selection of a speaker with the Master of Ceremonies. Offer the President an opportunity to make brief remarks.

Display of contest winners. If possible, arrange to have photos of the winning entries in the model and photo contests on display at the banquet. This provides further recognition for the winners and provides an opportunity for more people to see some of the best work of members.

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13 Raffle and Door Prizes

Door prizes. Door or raffle prizes can usually be obtained by donation from local hobby shops, from model manufacturers, and from publishers of railroad books and video tapes. Some NPRHA members may also be willing to donate prizes. The convention committee needs to designate one or more persons to solicit and gather the prizes. At the same time that prizes are solicited from local hobby shops, flyers or a poster about the convention can be left for display at the shop. Also, in return for donated prizes, a shop could be allowed to have a flyer inserted in the registration package. There should be banquet door prizes specifically for spouses.

Raffle. The raffle is a fun event and a major fund-raiser for the NPRHA. There should be a grand prize (we have been very fortunate in the past to have brass models donated by W&R Models) and a variety of worthwhile secondary prizes. Have the prizes displayed on a table at the banquet. Arrange to sell raffle tickets in advance by mail, as well as at the banquet. The tradition has been to sell “an arm’s length” for \$5.00. Have enough tickets on hand (at least 10 rolls) so as not to run out. Having tickets of several different colors encourages people to buy more tickets so as to have more than one color.

When? Hold the raffle after dinner and the speaker’s talk. If the speaker is on before dinner, it will allow more time to sell tickets, but allows people who are not interested in the raffle to leave. Place all of the stubs for tickets sold at the banquet into a hopper or box, but not the mail-order ticket stubs. Draw for all of the minor prizes first. People with winning numbers can select their prize from any of the minor prizes on the display table. Winning tickets are not returned to the hopper. After all of the minor prizes have been awarded, add the stubs from all of the mail-order tickets to the hopper and draw for the grand prize(s). If the winner is absent from the banquet, notify them and send them their prize. In any case, arrange to have a notice in the next issue of *The Mainstreeter* announcing the winner.

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14 Contests (Model, Photo, and Craft)

The purpose of the model and photo contests is to allow members to show off some of their work and for other members to enjoy seeing it. The contests also help promote further interest in the NP and educate members further about the railroad. All entries must be of NP-related subjects, including predecessors and partially-owned subsidiaries, such as the SP&S or the Camas Prairie. The contests will be organized and administered by the Modeling Committee, but someone should be assigned to coordinate this function for the Convention.

Contest publicity. While there have been some outstanding models and photos at past conventions, the participation could be greatly enlarged. Provide more advance publicity about the contests, including categories, rules, etc. Consider having a special category, such as a prize for the best model of a structure that once stood in the town where the convention is being held or of a particular type of equipment, such as an NP business car or track inspection car.

Entry Form sample (Appendix 19D1) lists both photos and ‘arts & crafts’ as options. It may be interesting to have a display of amateur ‘railfan’ photos, or pictures of NP sites as they ‘were and are’. Also, there might be interest in a display of railroad-oriented handiwork, especially by spouses, if publicized well enough in advance.

Contest registration and rules. A separate form should be completed for each entry.

Exhibition area requirements. An adequate number of tables must be provided.

Contest room security. The Contest Room MUST be locked whenever it is unattended.

Judging. Judging is by popular vote, not by an NMRA-type point system. Each registered attendee should get a form in their registration package to use in judging the entries. After being filled out, these forms are left at the contest room and then tabulated by the contest committee.

Contest awards. Provide 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons, as appropriate, in each judging category. Consider having a “best-of-show” and/or special category prize in addition. This could be a plaque or other memento. Announce the winners and award the prizes at the banquet, if possible, and display the winners at the banquet, if practical.

Contest Photos. Also, arrange to have good photos of the Model Contest winners taken with high-enough resolution for publication, using photo lighting, and report the results of the contests, with pictures of the models and displays, in the next issue of The Mainstreeter.

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15 Swap Meet

The swap meet is a popular part of the convention. It provides an opportunity for members to buy, sell, and trade NP-related items such as authentic artifacts, photos, books, and models. It is not a commercial marketplace generally open to the public. However, it is desirable to maximize the variety of NP-related items people bring to the swap meet. Vendors should be made aware that the swap meet is designed primarily for NP-related materiel, and that it is primarily held for the benefit of the Convention attendees.

Scheduling. The swap meet, including set-up, should be held as a scheduled event that does not conflict with other convention meetings or activities. It is best if it is scheduled at a time that permits maximum participation, such as on a Thursday or Friday evening or some time on Saturday. Although most activity takes place during the first hour after the meet opens, plenty of time should be allowed. Three or four hours is probably about right. It is feasible to overlap the second and third hours with the company store and/or the model and photo contest open periods. Set-up can overlap a mealtime. Assistance should be provided to help the Company Store in moving to and from the Swap Meet, with a prominent location to maximize sales.

Swap meet space requirements. A large room with space for 50 or more tables is required. It is better to have too much space rather than too little. It is possible to hold both the swap meet and the photo and model contests in the same room.

Security and control. Two people should be designated to be in the swap meet room during set-up and swap meet periods in order to keep unauthorized people out of the room and to help protect exhibitors against loss. Due to the difficulty in keeping an area secure when it is not in use, it is imperative for the swap meet to be held in a single session. Vendors should be assisted in removing their property as soon as the Swap Meet is over.

Swap meet ground rules. Those registered for the convention (who must, of course, be NPRHA members) have priority for tables.

- A. The first table for each registrant should be free in order to encourage maximum participation.
- B. Second priority is to NPRHA members who are not registered for the convention but who wish to have a table at the swap meet. They should be charged a nominal fee, such as \$10.00 above the cost of providing the table.
- C. Third priority for tables, if any remain, is to NPRHA members who want additional tables. All who want a second table should be accommodated before anyone gets a third table, etc. These additional tables should be charged for at a nominal fee, such as \$10.00 per table above the cost of providing the table.
- D. Fourth priority for tables, if any remain after all NPRHA members are accommodated, is to outside persons who wish to sell items at the swap meet. They should be charged a nominal fee, such as \$10.00 above the cost of providing the table. There is no reason to differentiate between commercial and non-commercial sellers for fourth-priority tables.
- E. Each person not registered for the convention but paying for a table should be provided with special "Vendor's Badges" for admission to the swap meet only.
- F. Admission to the swap meet requires either a convention registration badge or vendor badge.
- G. Only persons who have tables at the swap meet are permitted into the swap meet room in order to set up their tables prior to the scheduled time for the swap meet. This requires that doors be guarded during set-up times.
- H. Tables can be pre-assigned or taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Two or more persons desiring adjacent tables should be accommodated if at all possible. Some persons may require electrical outlets for their tables, such as for running video displays. Some tables close to outlets should be held for them.

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16 Company Store

The Company Store is an important service and fund-raiser for NPRHA. A major portion of the store's annual sales occur at the convention. It is therefore important that suitable space and schedule time be provided for the store's operation. Close coordination with the Manager(s) is very important.

Store set-up, security and take-down: Some material for the store will be delivered to the meeting location ahead of the convention. There needs to be some person designated to receive and have custody of these packages and some place for their secure storage. One or more local members should be designated to help in setting up, running, and taking down the store. During times when the store is set up but not open, there must be means for providing security for the store's merchandise.

Company Store schedule – Probably, the best times for the Company Store to be open are during breakfast and lunch periods, as well as in late afternoon following the presentations. As a courtesy to guest speakers, they should not conflict with the presentation schedules. This schedule, along with the location of the Store, should be prominently displayed throughout the convention.

17 Business Meetings

Board of Directors Meetings - In recent years, there have been two BOD meetings held in conjunction with the convention – one prior to the convention on Wednesday for about two hours, and a second, largely organizational meeting for about one hour on Sunday. These should be scheduled so as to not interfere with the General Convention Program.

Annual Membership Meeting – It should be remembered that this is the only opportunity the membership has an opportunity to dialogue in person with the Officers and Directors. It should be given a prominent position in the schedule, rather than being shoe-horned into an obscure time slot.

The agenda for this meeting, which should last about one hour, includes:

- A. Committee Reports
- B. Election of Board Members
- C. Old and New business

As an added inducement to members to participate, it is suggested that some special door prizes be provided as part of this session.

Special Awards/Recognition - In the past NPRHA has given special awards to individuals who have given the organization outstanding service. The Annual Membership Meeting and the Banquet are both appropriate forums for presenting such awards, as authorized by the Board of Directors.

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Appendix 18 A. Suggested Convention Committee

Board of Directors

Chair/ Co-Chair

Sub-Committees:

- Banquet
- Company Store
- Contests
- Hospitality
- Logistics
- Program
- Registration
- Swap Meet
- Tours/Trips

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Appendix 18B. Suggested Convention Budget Format

Convention Expenses:

Fixed Expenses (by Negotiation with Host Hotel)

Convention Meeting Rooms (if charged <u>separately</u> by Hotel)	\$	_____
Reserve for Under-utilized hotel rooms reserved in advance		_____
Break Refreshments (coffee, tea, ice water)		500
Projectors (overhead, movie, slide, computer)		400
Microphones (podium, wireless, etc.)		300
Complimentary Banquet Meals for Dinner Speaker & Honored Guests		100
Total Fixed	\$	1,300 +

Estimated Expenses (based on recent past Convention experience)

Printing Costs	\$	400
Mailing Costs		600
Telephone Costs		500
Presenter Mementos		400
Contest Awards		100
Miscellaneous (Contingency)		500

Total Estimated Expenses \$ 2,500

Total Non-Variable Expenses \$ 3,800 +(*)

Variable Expenses (Proportional to estimated number of potential Registrants):

Number of Registrants:	75	100	125	150	175
Registration Pkg.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Rail Excursion					
Spouse Excursion					
Busing costs	+	+	+	+	+
Total of Variable Exp.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total of Non-Variable (*)	+	+	+	+	+
Total Expenses	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Convention Income:					
Registration Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Tour Surcharges	+	+	+	+	+
Total Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
=====					
Net Excess or (Loss)	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

For planning purposes, a suggested break-even point would be 75 to 100 Member-Registrants, depending on the venue. Various numbers of Registrants should be studied, so as to avoid "surprises" occurring after fees have been established and publicized.

This Budget should be forwarded to the BOD for review and approval, through the President, by January 1 of the Convention year.

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Appendix 18C. Sample Convention Registration Form

NPRHA 20XX CONVENTION REGISTRATION
CITY, STATE JULY XX-XX

Registrant's Name _____(Nick)Name for Badge _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Registration Fee (includes spouse and minor dependents).....\$ XX

Name(s) of attending spouse and minor children (for badges) _____

NPRHA Annual Membership Fee (if registrant not currently a member)..... \$ XX

Note: If you are an NP Veteran not already a member, a free one-year membership will be extended to you at no charge.

Number of Banquet Meals @ \$XX each.....x \$XX = \$XX

Banquet Meal Selections (choose one for each meal paid for above):

___ Fish ___ Meat ___ Special Diet (Details):
___ Chicken ___ Vegetarian _____

Swap Meet Tables : (First table is free, additional tables are \$10 each) Yes___No___

Additional Swap Meet Tables ___ x \$10 = \$XX

Excursion Tickets: ___ tickets for option A (description)..... x \$XX = \$XX
___ tickets for option B (description)..... x \$XX = \$XX
___ tickets for option C (description).....x \$XX = \$XX
___ tickets for option D (description).....x \$XX = \$XX

Absentee Raffle Tickets, at \$XX for YY tickets: _____ Tickets = \$XX
=====

Total due with registration: \$XXX

Indicate preferences for various trip features, etc. _____

I request the opportunity to purchase ___ Convention Models, as available.

Mail this form along with your check or money order (payable in US funds), made out to:

NPRHA Convention 20XX
Convention Chair
City, State, Zip

Note: You may register directly on the secure NPRHA WebSite, www.NPRHA.org, and charge everything to your credit card, if you wish.

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Appendix 18D.1 Sample NPRHA Model Contest Entry Form

Name (Please Print) _____ Entry # _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

I POWER UNIT

[Optional]

___ (A) Steam Locomotive

___ (B) Diesel Locomotive

___ (C) Gas-Electric

Scale:

G _____

O _____

II ROLLING STOCK

[Optional]

___ (A) Passenger Car

___ (B) Freight Car

___ (C) Caboose

S _____

HO _____

N _____

Other _____

III OTHER

[Optional]

___ (A) Non-Revenue Car

___ (B) Structure / On Line

___ (C) Structure / Off Line

___ (D) Display / On Line

___ (E) Display / Off Line

IV PHOTO / Model Subject

___ (A) Black & White

___ (B) Color Print

___ (C) Slide

V PHOTO / Prototype Subject

___ (A) Black & White

___ (B) Color Print

___ (C) Slide

VI ARTS & CRAFTS

___ (A) Original

___ (B) Pattern Only

___ (C) Kit Built

General Description of Entry (use a separate ENTRY FORM for each item entered):

INSTRUCTIONS: (Models will be judged by category, regardless of scale, unless the number of entries warrants some separation by scale)

1. This Entry Form must be completed for each entry. The Construction Methods Sheet should also be completed for models.
2. Supplemental information, including plans and photos, may accompany your entry. The Contest Chair may limit this material, according to space available.
3. Entries may not be removed from the Contest Room without notification and presentation of the Claim Check to the Contest Committee.
4. After filling out this Entry Form and the Judges' Score Sheet (if applicable), return both to the Contest Room Clerk and receive the Entry Number for your Entry Form, Judges' Score Sheet, and Claim Check, which you should retain.

Tear <----->Tear

NPRHA Contest Claim Check:

I hereby certify that Entry # _____, entered in the Contest, has been returned to me in satisfactory condition.

MODELER'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

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Appendix 18D.2 Sample Model Construction Methods Form

Model Description _____ Contest Category No. _____ Entry # _____

Describe the model in detail. Check ALL the items that apply, including as much additional information as possible about techniques and work performed. Include photos, plans, and drawings, as desired.

CONSTRUCTION – Describe how the model was built, complexity of construction, methods used, etc.

☐ Drew my Own Plans ☐ Followed Construction Article
☐ Used Prototype Plans ☐ Cut and Fit Metal ☐ Cut and Fit Cardstock ☐ Soldered
☐ Used Kit Plans ☐ Cut and Fit Plastic ☐ Cut and Fit Glass ☐ Made Patterns
☐ Used Comm'l Plans ☐ Cut and Fit Wood ☐ Crosskitted or Kitbashed ☐ Made Molds

Give any additional information here:

DETAIL – Describe complexity, difficulty, refinement, amount of additional detail parts included:

CONFORMITY - Give information as to the prototype modeled, or explain the logic of the design.

FINISH & LETTERING – Describe methods in detail: _____

Finish: ☐ Brush ☐ Spray ☐ Airbrush ☐ Masking ☐ Weathering

Lettering: ☐ Decals ☐ Hand Letter ☐ Dry Transfers ☐ Photo Reduction ☐ Photoetch

SCRATCHBUILDING – List all parts you fabricated. Note any special or unusual features added:

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Appendix 18D.3 Sample Model Contest Ballot

Instructions: Vote for one model/project in each category, by writing in the Entry Number.

Please consider the following factors when voting for your favorite project:

1. Construction Quality
2. Amount of Detailing
3. Conformity to Prototype Practice
4. Finish and Lettering
5. Amount of Scratchbuilding Performed

I Power Unit

- ____ (A) Steam Locomotive
____ (B) Diesel Locomotive
____ (C) Gas-Electric

IV Photo / Model Subject

[Optional]

- ____ (A) Black & White
____ (B) Color Print
____ (C) Slide

II Rolling Stock

- ____ (A) Passenger Car
____ (B) Freight Car
____ (C) Caboose

V Photo / Prototype Subject

[Optional]

- ____ (A) Black & White
____ (B) Color Print
____ (C) Slide

III Other

- ____ (A) Non-Revenue Car
____ (B) Structure / On Line
____ (C) Structure / Off Line
____ (D) Display / On Line
____ (E) Display / Off Line

VI Arts & Crafts

[Optional]

- ____ (A) Original
____ (B) Pattern Only
____ (C) Kit Built

VII Best in Show _____

[Optional]