



HOW TO ORGANIZE A WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES REGIONAL EVENT

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Note: The following are suggestions to help you organize your World Congress of Families Regional Event. Please feel free to accept or reject any of these ideas. The event is yours and so are decisions on how to organize it. Your event should support the purpose and mission of the World Congress of Families and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to affirm the natural family as the fundamental and only sustainable unit of society and to defend the sanctity and dignity of every human life from conception to natural death.

I. Why Organize a World Congress of Families Regional Event?

1. To publicize your organization and its activities
2. To recruit new members
3. To train activists and leaders
4. To publicize your positions on crucial issues being debated in your country: marriage, parental rights, freedom of education, efforts of international bodies to undermine the autonomy of the natural family, sex education curricula, life issues (abortion, euthanasia, etc.) and demographics (declining fertility/demographic winter)
5. To link your organization to a growing international network of pro-family/pro-life groups through World Congress of Families.
6. To enhance your credibility through a joint project with an international organization that has organized seven successful World Congresses of Families, on three continents, since 1997, as well a dozens of regional events form Vancouver to Moscow, London to Latvia and Trinidad to Nigeria.

II. The Organizing Committee

1. The event/conference can be organized by an individual, organization or coalition. However you proceed, decision-making should be in the hands of an individual or small number of people.

2. Whatever approach you take, every effort should be made to reach out to groups that share your values, as well as organizations and churches of every denomination

3. Sponsorship is a way to involve other organizations – and ease the financial burden on your own -- while keeping decision-making in your hands. Sponsorship might entail a financial commitment or in-kind contribution (including conference facilities and printing) of anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 (depending on the anticipated size of the conference and the resources of potential sponsors) and entitle the sponsoring organization to recognition in the program and on the website, a literature table and a certain number of paid registrations.

III. Timeline

1. Creating a timeline (what needs to be done by what date) will help you keep track of deadlines.
2. Your timeline should include the following, in more or less chronological order (what needs to be done first to last): tentative dates for: having a budget -- choosing a venue – putting together a program – sending invitations to speakers – launching a website -- beginning to promote the event – finalizing the program – last-minute changes (probably a month out).

III. Choosing a Date(s)

1. In the northern hemisphere, late spring and early fall tend to work best. Avoid the summer, when many families take vacations.
2. Try to avoid a conflict with other major pro-family/pro-life events in your area that might schedule conventions, conferences, banquets, etc. about the same time.
3. Should the conference be one or two days? There are pros and cons for both. Obviously, a two-day event is more expensive. On the other hand, it gives you an opportunity to present more speakers and cover more topics. However, if it's well-organized and tightly-run, a one-day event can be quite effective and, obviously, a lot less expensive.
4. Weekends are best for busy, working people and speakers – especially those who have to travel a distance.

IV. Location

1. It's best to locate the conference in or near a major city, especially a political and media center. This will make it easier for representatives of the national government to attend and for the media to cover the conference.
2. Possible venues include public buildings, college and university halls, churches and hotel conference facilities. Try to hold the cost down, while looking for a venue with comfortable seating, good lighting and sound and a stage. Accessibility is also a factor. A university lecture hall fits all of these criteria.
3. Look for a facility adequate for the number you expect to attend. As a general rule, fewer will register than you anticipate. Try to come up with a realistic number. Having 110 people in a room that comfortably holds 100 looks better than having 150 in a room for 200.

4. If possible, the conference facility should be convenient to public transportation and hotels, for foreign speakers and attendees traveling a considerable distance, especially if the event is more than one day. Start with a smaller (less expensive) venue, based on reasonable expectations for attendance. Stay flexible. Have back-up plans (say for medium and large facilities) as circumstances change.

V. Cost

1. Try to keep your costs down, to keep your registration fee affordable. The last thing you want to do is to price young families out of the event with a registration fee that's too high.
2. If it's financially feasible, consider offering scholarships – for all or part of the registration fee -- on a needs basis, especially for students, seniors, clergy, teachers (and others working in the public sector) and single parents.
3. It's not always necessary to pay the travel expenses of foreign speakers. But, if your budget allows, you could offer accommodations and provide some meals for speakers.
4. If you want foreign speakers to give the conference more of an international flavor (and because they may be in a better position to handle certain topics), look for speakers affiliated with organizations which can pay their travel.
5. It's probably not necessary to provide meals for participants, though it is advisable to offer beverages and light snacks for breaks (morning and afternoon). The facility should be close to restaurants for the noon meal.
6. The success of a regional event lies in the content of speeches and attendance, rather than lavish surroundings.

VI. Registration Fees

1. Consider offering a discount for couples (husband and wife), whatever seems appropriate. For instance, if the registration fee is \$75, you might consider registering a couple for \$120.
2. As indicated above, depending on your resources/fundraising, consider subsidizing registrations with scholarships, on a needs basis.
3. Group registration is also an effective way to increase attendance, especially from churches. You might consider offering a 10% or 20% discount for groups of 5 or more.

VII. Budgeting

1. Try to devise a realistic budget. This may require revision over time. If anticipated revenue doesn't cover costs, think about how to make up the shortfall – donations, sponsors, raising registration fees or cutting expenses.
2. Plan for a shortfall – It's unusual to do a pro-family conference and not end up with a modest deficit, but no more than your organization can handle. A successful conference makes fundraising easier.

3. Unfortunately, people often wait until the last minute to register. Generally, half of your registrations will come in the last two weeks. If you only have a quarter of the registrants you need a month out, don't panic. But you may need to work harder on promoting the event.

VIII Program

1. Focus on issues relevant to your country/region – those currently discussed/debated or the basis of legislation or judicial action. This might include marriage (and efforts to redefine) abortion and other life issues, declining birth rates (Demographic Winter) parental rights, sex education, home schooling, pornography, drugs, attacks on faith, the “gay rights” movement and attempts by international organizations (e.g. United Nations, European Union) to promote a radical sexual agenda.
2. At least some of the speakers should have names recognizable to pro-family/pro-life activists in your area. This will help to boost attendance. It could include a radio personality, newspaper columnist, popular minister or priest, academic or prominent politician.

IX. Publicity

1. Networking is an important part of promoting your conference. What organizations in your country or city share your agenda? Will they recommend the conference to their members/contacts, and link to your site or registration page? Utilize social networking (Tweeter, Facebook, etc.).
2. Are there churches that will publicize your conference? Will the minister allow you to speak or distribute material after a service?
3. Can you get endorsements from prominent political, religious or media figures that can be used in your publicity?
4. Pre-publicity (newspaper and radio) can be helpful. At various stages of the planning process, put out press releases: announcing the program and speakers, etc. Try to get on local talk-shows, especially those with a conservative audience.
5. Set up a system for media registration and assign someone to act as a media liaison. Generally, media are not expected to pay a registration fee. Depending on the coverage you anticipate, try to have media kits available to distribute at the conference, content might include: basic material on your organization, World Congress of Families' literature, any press releases you've put out, brief speaker bios (if available) and a conference schedule.

X. Conference Website

1. Yes, you need one – and they're not expensive if you shop around for a web-designer.
2. If your organization has a web site, the conference could be separate page(s).
3. At the very least, you need a homepage that provides a general overview of the conference, a program page, a speakers page (with some background on the speakers,

limited to a paragraph or two for each), and a registration page (preferably including a way for registrants to pay the conference fee online).

4. Other information to be included on the conference website – contact information, a list of sponsoring organizations, background on World Congress of Families (who we are, what we believe, what we've done – with links to our website – www.worldcongress.org – and *World Congress of Families News*, for English speakers).

XI. What World Congress of Families Can Do for You

1. We can publicize your event to an international audience, including leaders and activists from over 80 nations (through *World Congress of Families News* and press releases). We can also link to your website.
2. We can put you in touch with experts who can speak authoritatively on various topics – or even make the initial contact to gauge their interest and availability.
3. We can advise you on organizing the conference, trying to address your specific concerns.
4. We can help you to connect with other organizations, in your country and in neighboring nations.
5. We can help you to devise a realistic budget.
6. Last, but certainly not least, using the World Congress of Families name and logo gives you the credibility of having your event associated with the largest worldwide alliance of pro-family organizations, which has held seven successful World Congresses on three continents, and dozens of regional events in the last 17 years.

Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions based on the foregoing. Contact Larry Jacobs at +1-815-997-7106 or larry@worldcongress.org or Don Feder at +1-508-405-1337 or dfeder@rcn.com.