

Make the Most of Your Meeting Dollars with Advice from the Pros

Meeting planner experts at the “**Make the Most of Your Meeting Dollars: How to Reduce Your Biggest Event Expenses**” panel discussion offered a number of invaluable tips to save money, locate speakers and sponsors, and host the best possible event.

- **Get help finding someone to present at the event.**

Consult a speakers' bureau, even if your budget is small; they can often identify speakers to fit your budget. Ask committees, your board, companies you have a relationship with, and other individuals if they have recommendations. Using a planning committee to help identify members and other potential speakers can make planning for current and future events easier.

- **Do your speaker due diligence.** Examine videos of speakers performing, attendee reviews, and any other information you can find on potential presenters to ensure they are entertaining and can communicate clearly.

- **Offset speaker costs with sponsors and vendors.** The Louisville Society for Human Resource Management has three to 10 sponsors per meeting and offers different levels of sponsorships with varying price points. Members are given a “passport card” and are entered to win a drawing for a free meeting if they visit all of the event sponsors.

FSA Management Group recommends brainstorming a list of potential sponsors by identifying companies who would like to interact with your audience. Reach out to them by phone and then follow up with an email to establish a connection.

- **Utilize all of your resources.** Trade magazines, networking groups, and peers can provide money-saving tips and helpful event planning recommendations. Venues can also serve as a resource and help you save money. UofL Event and Conference Services provides diagrams of room layouts for clients and offers event management assistance. For associations with a small staff, these additional resources can be valuable time-savers.

- **Ask for free Wi-Fi.** A number of facilities don't offer complimentary Wi-Fi for guests; when looking at facilities, see if they'll include it for free or for a discount in your contract. (Complimentary wireless internet is always included with your rental at UofL's ShelbyHurst Campus!)

- **Confirm quality.** Whether recording sessions or obtaining speaker materials, make sure you're getting high-resolution files that will reproduce well when printed or viewed.

- **Go paperless to save.** The Kentucky Association of Health Care Facilities posts event handouts online instead of printing them. Additionally, the association provides an app that lists seminar schedules and other event information.

If you're thinking of creating an app, work with a vendor that specializes in event-based tools or association management items.

If you can't go fully paperless, make some moves to reduce printing costs. Feature sponsor logos on a projector screen instead of on posters or printed programs. Put conference materials online and have attendees request printed copies.

When going paperless, ease attendees into the new system. The Kentucky Coalition of Nurse Practitioners & Nurse Midwives transitioned members to a digital system by first giving them an option to select printed materials or access conference materials from an app when registering for an event. Digitizing all meeting materials can be a huge timesaver on the back end, according to Jamie Keesling, the coalition's conference manager, who found it prevented the need to key in registration information and helped attendees submit evaluations.

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- **Share a detailed event schedule with the venue.**
If you need to be in at 7:00 a.m., and the event starts at 8:00 a.m., don't assume the venue will have the doors unlocked. Let them know when you'll need the lights on, when you'll be on site, and other key details.
- **Base catering on the head count you have on your order cutoff date.** Kayla Holzknacht, Louisville Society for Human Resource Management director of hospitality, shared that the number of last minute walk-ins usually cancel out the number of no-shows. By not adding extra meals, you can save on food costs, typically one of the biggest event expenses.
- **Maximize your food and beverage expenses.**
To get the most out of what you've spent, ask the caterer to serve leftover breakfast pastries on your morning break or leftover luncheon desserts for an afternoon snack.



The "Make the Most of Your Meeting Dollars: How to Reduce Your Biggest Event Expenses" panel discussion was hosted by UofL Event and Conference Services.

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The conference center at ShelbyHurst Campus can host as many as 500 guests for conferences, business meetings, banquets and more. With full-service meeting assistance and free parking, wireless internet, and A/V services, planning an event at ShelbyHurst is easy.

For more information on the facilities or to book an event, visit louisville.edu/conferenceservices.

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