

Convention Planning Guide

National Model Railroad Association

Lone Star Region



Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

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National Model Railroad Association

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Introduction

Since the Lone Star Region (LSR) of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) was organized in 1941, the LSR has featured some of the very best model railroad conventions. Many of you have attended these LSR conventions and many other business, sports, reunion, entertainment or social conventions.

Therefor you have a general idea of what goes on at a convention. Most conventions have the same basic elements of planning, organizing, implementing, and follow-up. A hotel featuring nice accommodations at a great rate will be needed. Clinicians must be recruited. For the exhibit and clinic rooms many tables and chairs will be required. Home layout and prototype tours are arranged, and buses might be needed. A financial plan (budget) to forecast and then track income and expenses is absolutely essential, as is a vibrant website and publicity strategy.

Most importantly you will need a capable, dedicated and dependable committee staff to handle the many responsibilities of hosting a convention. Assistant chair people should be recruited, trained and provided leadership. Volunteer workers will also be needed. Unfortunately, some LSR divisions may not have an adequate supply of personnel, so be prepared to solicit assistance from other divisions.

Finally, you will need lots of time, possibly several years to get everything done. Hosting a convention is not a simple thing that can be thrown together in a short amount of time.

What convention planners need are descriptions of the specific responsibilities and duties, such as registrar and treasurer, which must be done for a convention to be successful, educational, enjoyable, uplifting, etc. Convention committee members want specific lists or examples of what, when, where and how to carry out their responsibilities. Therefor it is not the intention of this LSR Convention Planning Guide to generalize on these basic elements. Instead, the intention is to provide specific discussions, reports, spreadsheets, documents, ideas and LSR reports to use as a guide towards a successful convention. These are continuously augmented and updated with new information or viewpoints. Many of these items may be presented in Microsoft Excel or Word which will facilitate your customizing them for your specific needs.

Your local convention is yours to plan, implement, and then relish the thanks and benefits for a job well done. The role of the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman is to advise and assist in any way possible.

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Convention Planning and Control Applications

An important step towards a successful convention is having the right people with a strong understanding of their responsibilities, and a good plan to follow. Having a timeline to complete each step of the process will allow for sufficient time to complete each task, and to avoid a last-minute rush trying to complete too many tasks at one time.

First, consider each part of a convention. Will there be an auction, raffle, door prizes? Will there be prototype and/or layout tours? Will there be items available for purchase through a company store? Of course, there will be registration, clinics, contest room, and awards presentation (banquet). There will need to be a Convention Chairman and a Treasurer. By appointing one person for each portion of a convention, that person can give 100% focus on their part of the convention. The following pages include a list of items to accomplish with workable timeframes to complete each item for each person.

Some members of a convention committee may require a team for assistance. Team members should report directly to their department chairman. Department chairmen would then report to the Convention Chairman. The Convention Chairman should schedule meetings for regular updates from each department, to verify that convention planning is moving forward, and being prepared to offer assistance when needed.

The Lone Star Region has a Regional Convention Committee including a Regional Conventions Chairman, that is available to provide assistance and guidance as needed.

There are a great many things that need to be done for every convention, so it is very important to develop a good control program to keep up with the tasks and assure that they get done. Copies of the applicable pages are distributed to the responsible chair persons and then reviewed by the convention planning group in monthly or semi-monthly progress meetings.

Use the following pages to track and monitor the progress of the convention preparation activity.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

The first step to having an enjoyable and successful convention, is to have a strong convention committee. Convention committee members will need to be prepared to invest the time and effort to fulfill their positions responsibilities. Some positions will require being familiar with Microsoft Word and/or Microsoft Word in order to complete various reports and duties.

Following is a break-down of possible convention committee positions. Some positions, such as Chairman, Treasurer, Registrar, Clinics Coordinator and Non-Rail Coordinator are mandatory. Other positions may be optional, depending on the overall activities taking place during the convention. The Official Convention General Information Report, found in this Convention Planning Guide, lists which assignments are required and which positions are optional.

It is highly recommended that each committee member be responsible for only one position, allowing them to give 100% focus on their area of responsibility. However, not recommended but, if necessary, multiple positions can be done by a single individual.

The Convention Chairman has the ultimate responsibility for all convention activities. It is important for every convention committee member to keep the Convention Chairman updated on the progress of all activities, and communicate any challenges or needs for assistance.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAIRMAN

The Host Convention Chairman is responsible for the overall planning, organizing, accomplishment, and follow-up of all aspects of the convention. While many duties may be delegated, the Chairman bears the ultimate responsibilities. “The buck stops here.”

The Chairman, together with his convention team, develops the theme and focus of the convention. Important considerations are clinics, lodging facilities, model and prototype railroading attractions, number of high-quality layouts, and other activities in the area that will have broad appeal to convention attendees and their families.

All aspects of the convention must continually be evaluated from the income and expenditure perspectives. The LSR provides a loan up to \$2,000 to help with convention start-up expenses. \$1,000 of the loan may be requested by the Host Group not earlier than two years prior to the convention. An additional loan not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000) may be requested by the Host Group not earlier than one year prior to the convention. Details for requesting the loan(s) can be found in Article V, Section 9, of the LSR By-Laws. Thus, the convention must be profitable to the extent that this loan is to be completely repaid before any profits can be distributed. The Convention Chairman and Treasurer has the ongoing responsibility to ensure that accurate and complete accounting practices, such as expense reporting, are being followed by all persons involved in the convention. The standard LSR Convention Reports, comprised of the General Information and Financial reports, are to be used for reporting the convention registration, activities, and finances. These Convention Reports will be reviewed by the Board of Directors after the convention and prior to the next Board of Directors meeting.

Secure chairpersons for all functions and/or activities. Primary chairpersons should be in place no later than one year prior to the start of the convention.

Establish dates for the convention. LSR conventions customarily run from Thursday to Sunday. LSR Conventions have been held during almost every month. However, avoid conflicts with many school schedules during the first two weeks of June. Father’s Day weekend is the preferred dates for the annual regional convention.

If layout operating sessions are to be included, the convention could start on Wednesday night with a possible limited number of clinics provided for early arrivers who are not operating.

Ensure that (written) contracts or agreements are entered into for all commercial arrangements, such as hotel, food catering, buses, and tours. The contracts with hotel or meeting venues are to be reviewed and discussed in advance with the Regional Conventions Chairman and Regional Convention Committee. Be sure that obscure terms or provisions, such as “all applicable charges” or “plus service charges”, are completely explained since these can cost thousands of dollars. For example, applicable service or gratuity charges at the banquet may add 20% to 30% to the costs. These are sometimes, but seldom, negotiable and might be waived entirely, although this is uncommon.

Any change in a contract or letter agreement is to be discussed with the Regional Conventions Chairman before being made. For the protection of the Host Group and the LSR, any contractual change must be in writing and either signed or initialed by both parties. It is a legal document. An original of the contract, with all amendments, attachments, menu selections, etc. that are fully executed by both parties, are to be retained in the convention’s permanent records file. Copies of the contract with the hotel and any other primary vendor are to be attached to the Convention Report being sent to the Regional Conventions Chairman.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - CHAIRMAN

The annual LSR convention shall be known as the “Lone Star Region (Year) Convention”. All contracts shall show the name of our organization as “Lone Star Region - NMRA”. No variations are permitted with the exception of an extension that identifies that year’s convention. This is essential so that the LSR can build a positive corporate history and credit rating to encourage hotels and others to offer better rates or deals.

There are numerous registrations, sales, events, activities, financial income, and expense data which must be maintained throughout the entire convention period in order to effectively complete the LSR Convention Reports. Thus, it is highly recommended that the Convention Chairman, Convention Treasurer, and key committee members become very familiar with these data and reporting requirements throughout the entire convention planning and execution periods instead of trying to reconstruct the information after the convention. A preliminary Convention Report is to be sent to the Regional Conventions Chairman within sixty (60) days after the convention. This preliminary report will be reviewed by the Regional Convention Committee which will submit comments back to the Host Group.

The tentative final Convention Report is to be submitted to the Regional Conventions Chairman within ninety (90) days after the closing of the convention, as well as all LSR By-Laws specified payments are to be submitted to the Regional Treasurer. The final Convention Report will be presented to the LSR Board of Directors within one-hundred fifty (150) days after the conclusion of the convention.

Develop the convention Registration Form showing hotel information and all activities (Rail and Non-Rail) that will require advance registration and/or payments. Review this form with the Regional Conventions Chairman for final checking for required statements. This form should be included on the convention website and in the issues of *The Marker Lamp* seven and four months before the convention, so it is imperative that it be sent in a publishable format to the editor of *The Marker Lamp* before the due dates.

The convention website is to be set up immediately after the conclusion of the prior year’s convention and include preliminary information about dates, clinics, tours, and the registration form.

Reconfirm **all** arrangements and participants, such as clinicians and venue arrangements, one month before convention.

Confirm that all deposits, such as for the convention hotel, food providers, or chartered buses, have been paid by the convention treasurer at least one month before the convention, or sooner if required. Generally, a contract is not considered secured unless a monetary deposit has been paid.

Develop and/or coordinate the banquet program, including an opening, recognitions, achievement program awards, contest awards, and Guest Speaker.

Create a logo for letterhead, advertising, etc. and distribute it to committee members no later than one year before the convention. Encourage the logo’s early use in promotions, etc.

Prepare *The Marker Lamp* articles for seven and four months before the convention.

Frequently use the LSR website and your own convention website for frequent “Breaking News” updates. Information can be periodically distributed immediately after the prior year’s convention, and more frequently when getting closer to the dates of the convention.

Meet with train clubs within the geographical area to provide information about the LSR, NMRA, and the convention. Secure membership mailing lists and request assistance and referrals for sources of printing, tours, equipment, etc.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - CHAIRMAN

Involve the entire Lone Star Region in the convention since LSR conventions are regional events.

At the LSR convention immediately prior to the forthcoming convention, the Chairman presents, from the podium, a detailed description of the upcoming convention including layout tours, clinics, guest speakers, prototype tours, non-rail activities, and other announcements.

Conduct debriefings after the convention attended by all chairpersons to get feedback and assess what went right and wrong. Put together comments and idea book for future conventions. This information is to be included in the General Information report sent to the Regional Conventions Chairman within sixty (60) days after the convention.

After the convention, the Chairman will assure that thank-you letters are sent to all convention workers, district convention officials, LSR officials, sponsors, contributors, etc.

The chairman will prepare an article for *The Marker Lamp* after the convention describing activities and thanking everyone, including merchandise donors, which assisted in the convention.

Communicate with the LSR President to determine if the Annual Membership Meeting will take place in a clinic room or during the Awards Banquet. Plan accordingly.

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Convention Chairman Responsibilities Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Register a dba / trade name for the convention.		2 years before convention			
With the Convention Treasurer, open a bank account solely for the convention.		2 years before convention			
Establish dates for convention.		2 years before convention			
Communicate with LSR President to determine if Annual Membership Meeting will take place in a clinic room or during the Awards Banquet.		2 years before convention			
Solicit bids from hotels/venues.		2 years before convention			
Send hotel contract(s) to LSR Board of Directors for review and approval.		2 years before convention			
Recruit members for the Convention Committee.		2 years before convention			
Work with Treasurer to create convention budget.		15 months before convention			
Advise Registrar of amounts for registration and add-ons by type and timelines.		15 months before convention			
Work with Publicity Coordinator to create convention name and logo.		15 months before convention			
Work with Webmaster to create content for the Convention website.		15 months before convention.			
Create content for convention website.		One year before convention			
Work with Publicity Coordinator for articles in <i>The Marker Lamp</i> .		10 months before convention.			
Work with Registrar to create manual registration form.		8 months before convention			
Send manual registration form to webmaster and <i>The Marker Lamp</i> Editor		7 months before convention.			
Meet with local train clubs to promote convention.		Ongoing			

Convention Chairman Responsibilities Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Provide Timetable Chair the "Chairman's Welcome" information for Timetable.		3 months before convention			
Work with Webmaster to keep website updated with Breaking News.		Ongoing			
Obtain Youth Award recipients from Division Directors		2 months before convention			
Work with Hotel/Banquet Coordinator, Speaker Coordinator, Contest Coordinator LSR Youth Chair for banquet agenda.		2 months before convention.			
Verify with Treasurer that all required deposits have been made.		1 month before convention			
Work with Clinics Coordinator to verify clinicians and A/V requirements.		1 month before convention			
Debriefing with all department coordinators. Add relevant information into Convention General Information report.		2 weeks after convention			
Send Thank You letter/email to all convention workers, sponsors, clinicians, etc.		1 week after convention			
Work with Convention Photographer and Contest Coordinator for article in next Edition of <i>The Marker Lamp</i> .		1 month after convention			
Create contest for next edition of <i>The Marker Lamp</i> .		1 month after convention			

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

TREASURER - FINANCE

Extensive financial, membership, registration, and attendance data are available about the Lone Star Region conventions and other LSR activities over the past 20+ years. These provide information for preparing projections, budgets, and budget vs. actual variance analysis using standard business practices and accounting procedures using readily available computer programs such as Microsoft Excel.

- Prepare projections of convention income and expenses. The “Income and Expense What-If Estimations” Excel spreadsheet provides an easy way to try different combinations of the number of registrants, costs of hotel meals and other necessary expenses, events, etc. to determine the impacts on the “bottom line”. The spreadsheet is available on the LSR Google Drive.
- Develop budget and on-going status financial reports for all financial aspects of convention. The “Budget vs. Actual” tab on the Conventional Financial Report can be used for this providing that entries on the “Ledger” tab are kept up to date.
- Become very familiar with the official LSR Convention Reports early in the convention planning process. A lot of detailed information is to be gathered for reporting in these Reports. It is much easier to set up record keeping procedures at the beginning rather than trying to pull it together after the close of the convention.
- Working with the Convention Chairman, open a bank account that will exclusively be used for the convention. Do not intermingle division funds with convention funds.
- The major of payments will be made by credit card. Create an account with a credit card processing company so that payments to the convention will go directly into the conventions bank account. Advise all convention committee members of the processors base per transaction fee and the percentage amount per purchase so that the credit card processing fees will be added to all convention activities requiring a purchase.
- A preliminary LSR Convention Report is to be submitted to the Regional Conventions Chairman as early as possible after the close of the convention but no later than within sixty (60) days after the convention’s conclusion. This report will be reviewed and comments will be submitted to the Convention Chairman. A Final Convention Report is to be submitted within ninety (90) days after the end of the convention, together with all payments prescribed in the LSR By-Laws.
- In conjunction with the Convention Chairman and applicable convention chairs, determine pricing for activities and tours.
- In conjunction with registration and auction chairs, account for monies received and disbursed.
- Establish and balance a separate bank account exclusively for convention financial transactions. If needed, the Regional Conventions Chairman can provide the needed LSR documents to establish a bank account.
- Write all expenses checks with co-signer controls if permitted by the bank.
- Prepares periodic reports showing the actual convention expenditures compared to the budget.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – TREASURER

- Assures that the Convention Chairman and all Activities Chairpersons understand and approve such reports.
- Determine what can be included in registration costs and what would be extra fares, such as tours requiring buses and/or admission costs.
- Make financial settlement with the hotel at the close of the convention as provided in the contract with the hotel.
- Within sixty (60) days after the convention, assure that all accounts payable and accounts receivables are settled.
- Prepare detail and summary financial reports for the Convention Chairman and the LSR Convention Committee.
- In conjunction with the Convention Chairman, Registrar, and other personnel, complete the Registration and Financial Sections of the prescribed Lone Star Region Convention Reports. These reports will be provided in Microsoft Word and Excel formats by the Regional Conventions Chairman.
- The By-Laws of the Lone Star Region in Article V – Conventions prescribe certain payments and their deadlines which must be made to the Lone Star Region. The first payment to the LSR is the per capita fee of \$10.00 per registrant family that is due no later than 30 days after the end of the convention (Article V, Section 10).
- The final Convention Report is to be submitted to the Regional Conventions Chairman within ninety (90) days after the end of the convention. All other payments specified by the LSR By-Laws (Auction percentage and 50 percent of the surplus of Convention monetary income after deduction of Convention-incurred shared expenses/income) are to be submitted to the Regional Treasurer within one-hundred twenty (120) after the end of the convention.

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Convention Treasurer / Finance Responsibilities – Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Open a bank account solely dedicated for the LSR convention.		2 years before convention			
Work with the convention chairman, and others if needed, to create a convention budget.		15 months before convention			
Review the Chart of Accounts noted on the Official Convention Financial Report with all convention committee members.		14 months before convention			
Distribute to each chairperson the budget for their specific activity so that they understand the maximum amount that can be spent for that activity.		One year before convention			
Assure that each convention committee member understands and approves the budget vs. actual reports.		One year before convention			
With the Convention Chairman, open a bank account exclusively for the convention.		One year before convention			
Set up an account with a credit card processing company to accept credit card payments.		One year before convention			
Make entries on Ledger tab of Official Convention Financial Report as they occur.		Ongoing			
Prepare monthly reports showing the actual expenditures compared to budget.		Ongoing			
Work out revised activity budgets with that activities chairperson while staying within the overall total projected budget amount.		Ongoing			
Verify all required deposits have been made.		1 month before convention			
Verify all required deposits have been made.		1 month before convention			
Coordinate with the Auction chairman for receipt and disbursement of auction funds.		Saturday of convention			
Coordinate with the Company Store chairman for receipts of company store sales.		1 week after convention			
Coordinate with the Raffle and Door Prize chairman for receipts of raffle sales.		1 week after convention			
Financial settlements with the hotel must be made per the contract with the hotel.		See hotel contract			

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Convention Treasurer / Finance Responsibilities – Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
After the convention, assure that all accounts payable and accounts receivables are settled.		1 week after convention			
After the convention, complete all accounting reports and send the official Convention Financial Report to the Regional Conventions Chairman.		1 month after convention			

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Registrar / Registration

Hopefully a flood of registrations will pour in soon after your new registration form and information are available on your convention website and the Lone Star Region (LSR) websites, *The Marker Lamp*, handouts in hobby stores, etc. Therefore, a computerized registration database, thoroughly pre-tested for accuracy and completeness, is a critical item to have ready to process these early registrations.

Microsoft Excel is an excellent program to use for this. In addition to the standard column of name, address, and contact information, it is important to include columns which can be used to sort the data for evaluation or analysis. For example, the registrants' LSR division can be used to prepare special reports for the various divisions Chairmen to know who is going to the convention from their division. By helping division members to get to know each other, arranging car-pools, etc., a lot of lasting benefits can be derived for the division.

It is very important to use exactly the same categories of registrants as stated in the Registration – Income section of the Official Lone Star Region Convention Financial Report. The reason for maintaining this strict format is to provide comparable data from one convention to another. The categories are: Rail, Non-Rail, Caboose (youth 6 years old or older), Minors (youth under 6 years old), Day Pass 1 Day, Day Pass 2 Day, and if the convention is longer than 3 days, a Day Pass 3 Day.

All registration activity which requires payment must be constantly monitored during the pre-convention period to assure that sufficient space, equipment, or transportation will be available. The quantity and income information for individual items, tours, or events must be entered into the LSR Convention Reports. Data for the Rails and Non-Rail activities is listed separately.

A good registration application uses the “sheet” or tab feature of Microsoft Excel to create these entries or work areas. Tracking Summary of Registrations showing each entry across the applicable fields; Confirmation Documentation for each registrant showing what they registered for and attached to Welcome Envelopes; and Name Badge. A “Registration Tracking, Confirmation, Name Badges” spreadsheet is available on the LSR Google Drive that can be used to accomplish this.

The Registrar should provide a count of the Rails and Non-Rails registrations to the Regional Conventions Chairman each Sunday or Monday during the last two months preceding the convention, or the Regional Conventions Chairman should have direct access to the registration information. Convention registrant information will be sent to the LSR Contest Chair in order to solicit judges for the Contest Room.

It has been shown that the number of registrations increases each time that an email “blast” is sent out.

The Microsoft Excel Registration Application

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet titled “Registration Tracking, Confirmation, Confirmation, Name Badge” can be used to keep track of the quantity and types of registrations, registrations for add-on fare items, and company store purchases. This spreadsheet can also be used to print name badges, and registration confirmations for mailing (only suggested for registrations not done online, but can be used for online registrations as well).

Fares tab – amounts for all convention registrations and activities, and if applicable, dates. This information carries over to all other tabs.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - REGISTRAR

Tracking tab – all registration and add-on purchases are entered on this tab. Information for the Summary tab will be calculated based on the information entered on the Tracking tab.

Summary tab – provides a grand total for the quantity of each item that has been registered for, and the revenue generated for each item.

Confirmation tab – by entering the Registration Number in column E, row 6, found in column A of the Tracking tab, all the registrant's information will be automatically populated.

The Confirmation page can be printed and used in the preparation for attendee registration bag/envelope, identifying any tour tickets, shirts, etc. that need to be included in each registration bag/envelope.

Badge tab – Entering the registration ID number (found in column A of the Tracking tab) to the right of "Registration ID #" will automatically populate the attendee's name and home town. Any information entered into column BN (Special Note on Badge) on the Tracking tab will also be entered onto the Name Badge. This information can identify Titles, days for Day Passes, etc.

REGISTRATION / REGISTRAR

- The total convention registration fees, all events that require preregistration, tour payments, clinic payments, and special-order merchandise must be accurately determined in time to be included in *The Marker Lamp* no less than ten months before the convention so that the final convention registration form can be developed.
- The Registration form must be included in *The Marker Lamp*. The registration form must be approved by the Regional Conventions Chairman before it is released to *The Marker Lamp* or placed on the websites.
- The registration form should be included in every issue of *The Marker Lamp*.
- The registration form shall state that the special LSR hotel room rate will be available only until the predetermined cut-off time established in the hotel contract. Thereafter, the hotel may have stated that it will be first come, first served often at a higher rate.
- Provide possible incentives for early registration such as price discounts and/or gifts. This is vitally important to sufficient planning and to identify if any convention activities are projected to be cost prohibitive.
- Duplicate registration information, forms and hotel information should be set up on the convention website by six months before the convention and provisions for early registrations should also be in place at that time.
- ***By no later than two weeks immediately before the convention, an accurate determination of the number of people that will be attending the convention is one of the most critical items.***

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – REGISTRAR

- The hotel and caterer require notification of the number of meals by a pre-determined date/time before the Saturday night banquet. This will determine the meal charges and obligations of the hotel under the catering contract. Thus, if a number of unexpected registrants show up on Thursday through Saturday, they possibly may not be able to attend the banquet. This could create an unbelievable furor that will haunt the convention Host Group for decades! Work out an arrangement for last-minute banquet count changes if at all possible. Some caterers will prepare meals for 3% to 5% over the meal guarantee, but this needs to be verified with the caterer.
- A well-tested computer application is essential for pre-convention registration and on-site registration. An Excel spreadsheet titled “Registration Tracking, Confirmation, Name Badges” is available on the LSR Google Drive as an option to be used for this purpose.
- The registration computer application must use a commonly available program; have bullet-proof procedures, and provide sufficient options to handle almost any situation. Registration personnel on duty must be computer literate and able to handle basic computer functions. The application developer must be available for handling possible situations.
- One of the important factors in the LSR Convention Report preparation is to present consistent data from year to year so valid comparisons can be made. Therefore, the categories of registrants in the registration portion of the Convention Report are Rail, Non-Rail, Minor 6 – 17 Years Old, Minor Under 6 Years, and Day Passes. In making what-if projections the important revenue numbers are those paying the full Rail fare. Review the Financial portion of the LSR Convention Report for further clarification.
- Registration form information is to be extracted into planning controls for a variety of convention activities and made available to the convention staff. For example, the LSR Contest Chair will need a list of registrants in order to solicit judges for the Contest Room. The Registrar is to provide to the Regional Conventions Chairman a weekly report of the number and type registered starting no less than three months prior to the convention and ending the first day of the convention.
- If the convention is at a hotel, a convention welcome and registration booth should to be set up in the hotel lobby starting at 3:00 Thursday afternoon prior to the convention. Highly visible signs announcing the LSR convention should be displayed as approved by the hotel.
- The registration booth should to be manned a minimum from 4:00pm until 8:00pm on Thursday, 8:00am until 7:00pm on Friday, from 8:00am until 2:00pm on Saturday, and possibly from 5:00 pm until 7:30 pm on Saturday afternoon. Registration personnel must be knowledgeable in the general operation and schedule of the convention, tours, operating sessions, etc. since they will create the first impression of the attendees of the convention.
- If a large registration is anticipated, it may be desirable to have two registration lines for A--M and N--Z to speed up the check-in process.
- Special prizes, raffle items, convention merchandise, LSR and NMRA information should be prominently displayed at the on-site registration desk.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide
CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – REGISTRAR

- Each registrant (LSR member and registered spouse) will receive a pre-prepared envelope containing nametag, all clinic schedules (usually in the form of a timetable), layout and prototype tours and maps, meal tickets, contest information and voting forms, silent auction information, hotel layout, other railroad or tourist interest items, and restaurants near the hotel.
- Be sure that the complete name of the registrant and their registration number is shown on the name badge. While both names should be in a large font, it is desirable that the first name be larger so that it can be seen easily from a distance. Neck straps/lanyards instead of pins are preferred for the name badges. Including the registrant's home town and/or division help in identifying new members and provide conversation ideas. It is recommended that name badge information be printed on both sides of the name badge.

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Convention Registrar Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Obtain Registration amounts and deadlines from Convention Chairman		15 months before convention			
Obtain Extra Fare events and fares from Tour Coordinators.		1 year before convention			
Create/modify registration platform.		1 year before convention			
Create Manual Registration form for inclusion in <i>The Marker Lamp</i> and on website.		7 months before convention			
Review registration cancellation policy with all committee members.		6 months before convention			
Advise Chairman number of Registrations/Timetables to order.		6 weeks before convention			
Provide Chairman weekly updates on convention registrations by type.		3 months before convention			
Arrangements for on-site computer, name badges, welcome packets for walk-ins.		2 months before convention			
Work with Printing/Timetable Chair to determine number of Timetables to be printed.		6 weeks before convention			
Provide information to with Printing Chair for Name Badges.		3 weeks before convention			
Prepare convention attendee packets.		1 week before convention			
Familiarize on-site registration desk for software for walk-ins and add-ons.		During convention			
Promote Raffle Sales, Company Store items, and sell vacant tour sets.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

PUBLICITY

A strong and constant publicity campaign is imperative for a successful convention. Publicity should include convention registration and all activities. Strive to answer the questions of how, who, what and when. Remember to communicate important updates as they occur.

- The proven publicity concept is to provide a constant barrage of “developing” stories frequently to all available outlets. Recent experiences have proven this works such as there is a surge of convention registrations each time there is publicity and almost doubling the registrations in the final six weeks of a convention. You can’t argue with success. Initially, announcements should be sent once a month. Within five months, information should be distributed every three weeks. Within three months, convention announcements should be sent every two weeks, or more often if a significant update needs to be distributed.
- Place convention stories and notices in all possible railroad and convention area publications, TV and radio stations, internet sites, and everywhere else.
- Determine cut-off dates by which these notices must be received by above publications.
- Distribute large posters to convention area hobby shops, etc. Offer to assist shop owner/manager in hanging poster to assure it is done and is very visible to customers.
- Distribute notices and hand-out sheets to local, state, and neighboring NMRA region hobby shops.
- Make follow-up calls to most important local and distant hobby shops to see how promotion is going and if they need additional sheets or information.
- Submit articles for every issue of *The Marker Lamp* to promote the convention.
- Promote the convention at division meetings and local train clubs’ meetings.
- The Marker Lamp edition issued approximately two to three months prior to the convention should be a “Convention Issue”, discussing every activity taking place during the convention. This is the time frame when the majority of convention registrations will take place, and every aspect of the convention should be publicized. This will create an appeal to each and every potential convention registrant, regardless what their primary interest(s) might be.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Publicity Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Create stories about the location city points-of-interest and convention activities to be included in the <i>The Marker Lamp</i> one year prior to the convention.		1 year before convention			
Submit periodic convention updates to the LSR Secretary for email blasts.		Ongoing			
Send LSR Division Directors convention updates to share at monthly meetings		Monthly			
Distribute flyers/posters to local hobby shops.		Ongoing			
Attend local trains shows for convention registration forms.		Ongoing			
Communicate with other convention coordinators and provide information to Webmaster for updates on conventions website.		Ongoing			
Create stories about the location city points-of-interest and convention activities to be included in the <i>The Marker Lamp</i> seven months prior to the convention.		7 months before convention			
Create stories about the location city points-of-interest and convention activities to be included in <i>The Marker Lamp</i> 4 months prior to the convention.		4 months before convention			
Send email blast to LSR Secretary prior to expiration of Early Bird registration fare discontinued		2 weeks before expiration date			
Send email blast to LSR Secretary prior to deadline to make hotel reservations to receive group discounted hotel rate		2 weeks before expiration date			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

WEBMASTER

A vibrant website is crucial to promote the annual LSR convention. The website should include all information pertaining to the convention such as;

- Convention dates and location
- A link for online registration
- A printable registration form
- A link to make reservations at the host hotel
- Clinic information including Clinic Titles, Clinicians name, and a brief summary of each clinic
- All Non-Rail activities and tours
- Contest information, especially if there will be a special contest category.
- Prototype tours information
- Layout tours information
- Guest speaker information
- Links to past convention related articles in *The Marker Lamp*

The Lone Star Region has created a website that can be used by each year's convention. Information to be posted on the website should be sent to the LSR Web Chair immediately following the prior year's convention.

- The webmaster is NOT responsible for the content of the convention's website. Convention committee members are responsible for providing the Webmaster all information that is to be included on the convention's website.
- The Webmaster will need to inform all website contributors the required resolution for all photographs/pictures.
- Coordinate with LSR Web Chair to transition the Convention's website as soon as the prior year's convention is finished.

Convention Webmaster Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Review prior year's convention website to become familiar with what will be needed		18 months before convention			
Obtain initial convention information from committee members		14 months before convention			
Update LSR hosted website with convention dates, location, registration fares and additional available information.		Immediately after prior year's convention.			
Update website as new convention information becomes available		Ongoing			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CLINIC COORDINATOR CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Clinics

One of the most popular reasons that Lone Star Region (LSR) members attend the annual convention is for the educational value of the clinics. Many conventions have clinics starting on Thursday afternoon/evening, throughout the day of Friday, and until mid-afternoon on Saturday. Depending on the dates and duration of a LSR convention, clinics could start earlier and/or continue into Sunday morning. As some convention attendees leave as soon as the clinics are finished, having activities on Sunday, such as clinics, could help to increase the number of people that attend the Awards Banquet and contribute to more occupied hotel rooms for the final convention night, which could help towards fulfilling any minimum food requirements or of a hotel room block.

Clinics at LSR conventions can cover a wide range of topics, including prototype railroads from the past to present, using the latest electronic devices, photography, railroad museums, railroad related industries, including industries that commonly use the railroad to transport their manufacturing supplies and final manufactured goods, presentations on home layouts, aspects of the NMRA Achievement Program (AP), and every aspect of model railroading materials and techniques.

Although it is nice to have a unique clinic that has never been presented before, you do not have to “reinvent the wheel” to create a good clinic lineup. As the saying goes, you can ask five different modelers how to do one thing and you will get twenty different answers. Modelers use different techniques to create similar results, so repeating topics from past conventions is a common occurrence. Additionally, new LSR members may not have been introduced to a topic and/or clinician in the past.

Every effort should be made to not having operating sessions at the same time that clinics are taking place. Hosts of operating sessions, clinicians, and convention attendees may have a conflict if there are too many options available at the same time, deterring from the overall convention experience. Operating sessions during clinic hours might prevent hosts of operating sessions from attending the convention. The same applies to layout tours. A carefully planned schedule will allow everyone to enjoy the full experience of a LSR convention.

Clinicians do not have to be members of your local division. There are several clinicians that are regular presenters at LSR conventions, regardless of the convention location. When first recruiting clinicians, identify what topic they would like to present. As your agenda begins to fill, seek presenters for topics not already being covered to provide a well-rounded selection of clinics for the convention attendees.

As you confirm your clinicians, have each person provide a short biography and a brief summary of their clinic. This information can be used in the Timetable, as well as for used marketing purposes. Some clinicians have a following, and could contribute to the number of people that register for your convention.

“Hands-On / Make-N-Take” clinics will usually require an additional fee to participate. The amount of the fee might vary based on the scale for each participant. As most purchases are done with a credit card, the convention will incur credit card processing fees for each add-on clinic / event. When communicating with the clinicians, advise them that their based fee will be paid to them, but that the convention will post a slightly higher amount to process the credit card processing fees. When providing information to the Registrar, Treasurer, Webmaster and Publicity Coordinator for clinics with an add-on fee, make them aware of the clinicians charge and the need to add an additional amount to cover the credit card processing fees.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - CLINICS

As you get closer to the convention dates, make sure to communicate with each clinician the date(s) and time(s) that they are scheduled to present their clinic(s) so that they can coordinate their personal schedule accordingly. This is also a good time to identify if each clinician has any special needs.

With each clinician, identify what type of equipment they will need. The LSR has an inventory of equipment, detailed in the LSR Audio-Visual & Other Equipment Inventory section of the Convention Planning Guide, for use at the annual LSR convention. The LSR does not have computers. The clinician has the responsibility of providing their own computer, or the Host Group can have computers already

available which minimizes the amount of time to transition from one clinician to the next. If the clinician is unable to provide their own computer, they might ask the Host Group to provide one for them. It is important to verify this prior to the convention to make sure that all the necessary equipment and software is ready before each clinic, and that the clinician's computer is compatible with the LSR's LCD projectors.

As you recruit clinicians, keep in mind that clinicians will receive twice the amount of Time Units for the Volunteer AP as opposed to providing a clinic at the division level. The same applies to the Author AP when a hand-out is provided as part of the clinic.

When creating a schedule for clinics, a uniform schedule for each clinic room is important to allow an orderly flow from clinic to clinic. Consider the attendees comfort and attention span. Clinics should run for one-hour, including time for a question-and-answer period. In between clinics, schedule a thirty minute "break", allowing the clinician to remove their computer, the new clinician to get set-up, and the convention attendees to stretch their legs and get to the next clinic. If a clinic requires more than a full hour, it can be divided into segments, i.e., Part 1 and Part 2. A thirty-minute break should still be scheduled for multi-part clinics, although the clinician and clinic attendees may opt to continue the clinic through the break.

Using the afore suggested time frames, starting at 8:00am and ending at 9:30pm, a convention could have three clinics in the morning, three clinics in the afternoon, and two clinics in the evening, with a one-hour lunch break and a two-hour dinner break.

When coordinating the set-up for each clinic room, keep in mind that most, but not all clinics, are set theatre style (chairs only) for the attendees, with a table and chair centered or off-center at the front of the room for the presenter, and space for a projector and projection screen. If there are three clinic rooms then seating in each room should be available for approximately one-third of the convention registrants, if there are four clinic rooms then seating in each room should be available for approximately one-fourth of the convention registrants, and so on. It is impossible to pre-determine how many people will attend a clinic. Some clinics have been so well attended that there was standing room only in every nook and cranny after all the seats were occupied. If there is extra space available, more seating is always a good proactive plan, but in very large rooms you do not want to have too many seats that would make a room seem empty even though an equal representation of the convention registrants is present. Also consider the best seating arrangement so that the attendees will have optimal viewing of the clinician and their presentation.

If there are Make-n-Take, Modeling with The Masters clinics, or any other clinics that would require tables for the attendees, these clinics should be scheduled at the end of the clinic schedule, and in one designated room. Room arrangements might need to be changed, without interfering with the clinic schedule. If necessary, a clinic time-slot might have to be left vacant in order to allow the venue staff enough time to change the room arrangement. When possible, coordinate room set-up changes to take place overnight, after the day's clinics are finished.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - CLINICS

When possible, two sections with a center aisle in between, and aisles along the perimeter walls, with rows of six to ten chairs in each section, is the optimum seating arrangement. An aisle between the chairs and walls provides easy access from either side of each section, and is usually required per local fire code regulations, unless a row along the wall consists of only a couple/few chairs. Under no circumstances should any emergency exit be blocked by any tables, chairs or equipment. The key factor to consider when determining a room set-up is that all attendees will have a safe and reasonably easy view of the clinic presentation.

If there are meeting space limitations for clinics, a Host Group might consider using Pipe & Drape partitions to use one large room for more than one clinic room. This is not recommended as the noise bleed from one clinic could interfere with another clinic. Additionally, some clinicians might be soft spoken, and sound from another clinic may make it difficult to hear the clinician. Individual rooms, or a large room that can be subdivided with sound-barrier or air-walls, should always be used for each clinic room. It is important to note that the divider walls in most venues are strictly designed to restrict visibility, not sound, so use of a microphone and speakers in a clinic room with air-walls is not recommended.

Communicate with the LSR President to determine if a clinic room will be needed for the Annual Membership Meeting. If yes, work with the LSR President when the clinic room needs to be set aside for the membership meeting.

Once the LSR convention is over, provide the Convention Chairman a listing of all clinic topics and the name of the person that presented the clinic, as this will need to be included the LSR Final General Information Convention Report. Information on any successes or challenges should also be provided, as this will be a learning tool for future LSR conventions.

CLINICS

- Establish a majority (15) of the clinics and presenters a year before your convention so promotional information can be distributed at that prior convention in addition to the presentation by the Host Group Chairman during the prior year's banquet.
- With three rail clinic rooms, approximately thirty (30) clinics starting Thursday afternoon/evening through Saturday afternoon is needed. If operating sessions are being held on Wednesday night, then a limited number of clinics can be scheduled also on Wednesday for other early arrivers who are not operating.
- Have several "drawing card" clinicians trying to not duplicate recent clinics which may have been seen at other recent activities.
- Develop clinic themes, such as prototype modeling or operations, but have a broad mix of subjects and scales to provide something for a variety of interests.
- Send a survey form to each clinician several months before the convention requesting a brief description of their clinic which will be put on the convention website and in the convention timetable booklet. Although each clinician is expected to provide their own computer, request detailed information about their audio/visual equipment needs.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – CLINICS

- 4 rooms will be needed daily for the clinics – 3 for the Rail topics and 1 for the Non-Rails. Rail clinic rooms should accommodate 40 to 50 people in each room. Tables will be necessary in one room arranged in conference style for Non-Rails. Theater seating (chairs only) may be okay for the rail clinics. Room setup arrangement diagrams for each room should be provided to the hotel. Usually there is no charge for the initial setup, but expensive charges may be made for rearrangements. These room arrangements are to be covered in detail in the Banquet Event Orders with the hotel.
- If expensive audio/visual equipment, etc. is left in the rooms during breaks, lunch, etc., the clinic rooms should be locked or security personnel provided. In the past, this expensive equipment has been stolen in brief unguarded seconds. Digital projectors and screens should be placed in a lockable storage room when the clinic room is unoccupied for longer periods, i.e., overnight. It is the responsibility of the Host Group to provide the necessary security.
- Assure that all required equipment, such as projectors, projector tables, work tables, electric cords, computer cords, screens, flip-charts, markers, laser pointers, etc. are set-up on time and that everything is operating satisfactorily. Determine how the room lights can be dimmed. Develop sources of back-up equipment that can be quickly obtained in an emergency. Remember Murphy's law. Provide drinking water and glasses in or outside convention rooms unless such is an expensive extra charge by the hotel. Coffee and tea are not needed.
- Determine if special materials to protect tables and carpet are necessary. Be sure they are used to avoid costly repair or cleaning charges by the venue. If necessary, check with the venue about unusual situations. Remember Murphy's law.
- Provide lobby displays near the registration table promoting clinics, clinicians, times and/or time changes, and clinic locations.
- Provide hallway signs pointing to rooms and have signs at each clinic room door.
- Send thank-you letters to all clinicians. These can be a mail-merge type of form letter, but they must be personalized for each individual.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Clinic Coordinator Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Coordinate with Convention Chairman dates, times and quantities for clinics.		18 months before convention			
Recruit clinicians. Identify when clinicians are <u>not</u> available.		18 months before convention			
Have 50% clinicians by prior year's convention to announce at previous years banquet.		1 year before convention			
Communicate with LSR President to determine if a clinic room will be needed for the Annual Membership Meeting.		1 year before convention			
Work with Convention Chairman and Publicity Chair to create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / LSR website to recruit clinicians, if needed, one year before the convention. Include contact information. Submit to Convention Chairman.		1 year before convention			
Work with Convention Chairman and Publicity Chair to create an article for The Marker Lamp / LSR website to recruit clinicians, if needed, nine months before the convention. Include contact information. Submit to Convention Chairman.		9 months before convention			
Send out a questionnaire to all clinicians requesting accurate clinic title, description, equipment needs, clinician biography and any special needs.		9 months before convention and ongoing			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / LSR website with any last-minute news and a final list of clinicians, seven months before the convention. Submit to Convention Chairman.		7 months before convention			
Develop the clinic schedule and room assignments.		3 months before convention			
Provide clinic schedule to Printing Chair.		2 months before convention			
Coordinate clinician's equipment and room arrangement needs.		2 months before convention			
Reconfirm all clinics one month before convention.		1 month before convention			
Hallway signs pointing to clinic rooms and signs at each clinic room door showing next scheduled clinics. Coordinate with Printing Chair.		1 month before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Clinic Coordinator Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Post any changes that occur after Timetable is printed on lobby information board and outside clinic rooms.		During convention			
Lobby display promoting clinics and clinicians, showing times and locations. Coordinate with Printing Chair.		During convention			
Have venue setup clinic rooms. Double check for accuracy, working with Hotel Coordinator.		Beginning of and during convention			
Provide professional introductions for each clinician. Utilize volunteers.		During convention			
Coordinate with Security Chair and with hotel personnel that doors are locked and checked for compliance.		During convention			
Send Thank You letter/email to clinicians		1 week after convention			
Create article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website with thanks to those that presented clinics, include photos. Submit to Convention Chairman.		1 month after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Non-Rails

The Non-Rail attendees at Lone Star Region (LSR) conventions are an enthusiastic group of people. The Non-Rails are not always female attendees because sometimes the lady of a family is the model railroader. Also, Non-Rail activities can attract more Rail attendees.

For the Non-Rails program, the same planning, organizing, determining and assigning responsibilities, getting things done, and follow-up is much the same as it is for the Rails activities. Therefore, much of the contents of the Convention Planning Guide is applicable to the Non-Rail activities.

Non-Rail activities take place at the same time as Rail clinics. Many times, they feature doing or making something rather than just listening to a lecture. Local points of interest such as Botanical Gardens, Museums, unique shopping, and Wine Tours can be popular activities. Your local Convention & Visitors Bureau is a good place to identify Non-Rail activities in your area.

Arts and Crafts projects are also a popular Non-Rail activity. Local artisans may have “how to” clinics at their businesses, or might come to the Non-Rail clinic room for a presentation. These may require several hours, or days, to complete a project. Sometimes a local craft store might provide an instructor to lead an Arts & Crafts project. As with every other convention activity, special consideration and planning should be made to ensure that the proper materials and equipment are available, and that the Non-Rail room is set-up to provide enough table space for each participant to comfortably work on their project.

In addition to including Non-Rail information in the Timetable, consider having signage at the Registration Desk for Non-Rail activities, including dates and times. This may help to encourage participation in Non-Rail activities and contribute towards the value of Non-Rails attending the LSR convention.

To help start the creative process, following are examples of Non-Rail activities that have taken place at past LSR conventions.

Clinics

Backdrop Painting*	Beaded Bracelet
Book Review	Christmas Ornament
Decorating a Tote Bag	Dining on the Railroad*
Estate Planning*	Flower Arranging
4 th of July Banner	Gardening Tips
Greeting Card Making	Hand Quilting
Harvey Houses & Their Girls*	Helpful Household Hints
Ladder Lace Necklace & Earrings	Making Miniature Bird Houses
Making a Silk Flower Corsage	Memory Plate
Model Tree Making*	Painting a Bookmark
Project Linus Blankets	Quilting T-Shirts & Neckties
Saucer Scenes	Scrap Booking
Seasonal Wreath	Sock Snowman
Stained Glass	Travel & Personal Safety
Wine Cork Crafts	

* Could also be considered as a Rails clinic.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – NON-RAILS

Outside Activities

American Wind Power Museum Tour	Bingo
Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum	Central Market Cooking Class
Cockrell Butterfly Exhibit	Decorating a Tote Bag
Fort Worth Botanical Gardens	Historic Neighborhood Tour
Making a Sill Flower Corsage	Mary Kay Cosmetics Headquarters/Plant Tour
Night at the Movies	San Antonio River Boat Ride
Sculpture Gardens	Shopping at an Outlet Mall
Sightseeing Tour	Slaton Harvey House
Style Show	Sundance Square & Stock Yards Tour
Wine Tasting Tour	

NON-RAIL CLINICS

- It is possibly better to have a separate chairlady for the clinics who will work closely with the Non-Rail Tours chairlady.
- ***Backup plans are essential.***
- A clinic theme can be developed, but have a broad mix of subjects to provide something for a variety of interests. The daily daytime TV shows provide many interesting ideas on places, people, and things in the convention area. Possibly have a separate auction for the ladies.
- Send a survey form to each Non-Rail clinician several months before the convention requesting a brief description of their clinic which will be put on the convention website and in the convention timetable booklet. Although each clinician is expected to provide their own computer, request detailed information about their audio/visual equipment requirements.
- Determine best room setup for all clinics and prepare a drawing so the hotel can setup the tables and chairs accordingly. Usually there is no charge for the initial setup, but may charge for rearrangements.
- Assure that all required equipment, such as projector, projector table, projection screen, work tables, electric cords, computer cords, flip-charts, markers, laser pointers, etc. are available on time and that everything is operating satisfactorily. Determine how the room lights can be dimmed. Develop sources of back-up equipment that can be quickly obtained in an emergency. Remember Murphy's law. Provide drinking water and glasses in the convention room unless such is an expensive extra charge by the hotel. Coffee and tea are not needed.
- If expensive audio/visual equipment, etc. is left in the rooms during breaks, lunch, etc., the clinic rooms should be locked or security personnel provided. This expensive equipment has been stolen in brief unguarded seconds in the past. Digital projectors and screens should be placed in a lockable storage room when the clinic room is unoccupied for longer periods. i.e., overnight. It is the responsibility of the Host Group to provide the necessary security.
- For clinicians not directly associated with railroading, banquet meal tickets could be purchased and given as partial compensation, but not required.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – NON-RAILS

- Reconfirm all clinics two weeks before convention and again just a week out. Post any changes that occur after programs are printed on the conventions lobby bulletin board.
- Determine if special materials to protect tables and carpet are necessary. Be sure they are used to avoid costly repair or cleaning charges by the venue. If necessary, check with the venue about unusual situations. Remember Murphy's Law.
- Present personal introductions for each clinician prior to **every** clinic.
- Provide lobby displays near the registration table promoting clinics, clinicians, times and/or time changes, and clinic locations.
- Provide hallway signs pointing to rooms and have signs at each clinic room door.
- For out-of-state clinicians, consider providing airport pick-up and return, taking to layouts, etc.
- Send thank-you letters to all clinicians. These can be a mail-merge type of form letter, but they must be personalized for each individual.

Convention Non-Rail Clinics Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Recruit clinicians.		18 months before convention			
Develop "Special Contest Entry" with Convention Chairman.		18 months before convention			
Send "Special Contest Entry" information to Webmaster to include on convention website.		Immediately after prior year's convention			
Send "Special Contest Entry" information to LSR Secretary for eblast to LSR members.		Immediately after prior year's convention			
Send "Special Contest Entry" information to Publicity Chair.		One year before convention			
Determine meeting room setup with Hotel Coordinator.		One year before convention			
Determine any required audio/visual equipment needed for clinics and advise A/V Coordinator.		6 months before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

HOTEL and BANQUET COORDINATOR

- Assist the Convention Chairman in contractual and banquet event order meetings with the hotel.
- Coordinate all convention activities with hotel staff.
- Assure that the hotel carries out all of its responsibilities and agreements as provided in the contract.
- Assure that adequate tables, chairs and required equipment are available for registration, clinics, contests, banquets, and all other functions.
- Assure that meals at Saturday banquet are set up and served as agreed.
- Watch for additional or hidden charges from hotel, and immediately notify Treasurer or Chairman should such occur.
- Arrange for and coordinate bus loading area.
- Assist convention security with their responsibilities.

Convention Hotel & Banquet Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Review all convention activities with the Convention Chairman.			6 months before convention		
Determine hotel contacts for convention activities.			6 months before convention		
Coordinate all convention activities with the hotel staff.			1 month before convention		
Make sure that hotels meal guarantee deadline is met and notify hotel if any increases are needed.			1 week before and during convention		
Assure that hotel fulfills all of its responsibilities and agreements as provided in the convention/hotel contract.			During convention		
Assure that adequate tables, chairs, and required equipment are available for registration, clinics, contest room, non-rail room, banquet and all other convention functions.			During convention		
Watch for additional or hidden charges from the hotel and immediately notify the Convention Treasurer and/or Convention Chairman.			Before and during convention		

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

GUEST SPEAKER COORDINATOR

An important component of a LSR convention is to have a good Guest Speaker, making a presentation during the Saturday evening Awards Banquet. A good Guest Speaker can help to generate both convention registrations and extra banquet meal ticket sales.

The Guest Speaker can be someone that has a strong presence in the model railroading community, a representative of a prototype railroad, a museum that includes railroading, a model railroad manufacturer, etc. The Guest Speaker could be a person that ties into the theme of the regional convention. The Guest Speaker can be a person from a national, regional, or local level.

It is not uncommon to provide the Guest Speaker complimentary registration to the LSR convention, an expression of appreciation of their providing their presentation. Careful consideration should be made before offering any additional incentives, such as paying for their airline ticket or hotel room. However, the convention's hotel complimentary room pick-up policy could be used for the Guest Speakers overnight lodging.

If the Guest Speaker is flying in from out-of-town, arranging for ground transportation from/to the airport is an option to consider. Transportation for layout visits and/or operating sessions might also be needed.

Guest Speaker

- Recruit a Guest Speaker that will have a strong appeal to the convention's attendees.
- Obtain information about the Guest Speaker and their presentation to be used for publicity in *The Marker Lamp*, email blasts, and on the convention's website.
- Determine any special audio-visual needs that the Guest Speaker might have.
- Coordinate the Guest Speaker's presentation with the Banquet Audio-Visual Coordinator.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Guest Speaker Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine with Convention Chairman and Convention Treasurer if any of guest speaker's expenses (travel, hotel) will be paid for by the convention.		18 months before convention			
Contact potential guest speakers and determine their level of interest.		18 months before convention			
Determine with Convention Chairman for priority ranking of their topic and level of interest.		18 months before convention			
Get commitment from desired guest speaker.		1 year before convention			
Determine a back-up plan incase guest speaker is unable to attend at the last minute.		7 months before convention			
Ensure that back-up plan is in place.		2 months before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / webpage with biography and photograph of guest speaker, seven months before the convention. Submit to the Convention Chairman.		7 months before convention.			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / webpage with any updates on the guest speaker four months before the convention. Submit to the Convention Chairman.		4 months before convention			
Contact guest speaker for last minute needs and changes.		1 month before convention			
Ensure that guest speakers last minutes needs or changes are taken care of.		1 month before convention			
Greet guest speaker upon arrival.		During convention			
Assist the guest speaker with hotel check-in and familiarize them with the convention activities.		During convention			
Ensure that the guest speakers needs for the banquet are take care of. Coordinate with the Convention Chairman.		During convention			
Ensure you or a representative is available to assist the guest speaker for the entire length of their stay.		During convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website after the convention with thanking the guest speaker, with pictures and "how it went" information. Submit to the Convention Chairman and Publicity Chair.		1 month after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

BANQUET AUDIO/VISUAL

At some venues, an in-house audio/visual system might be available to use during the Awards Banquet. If available, this would eliminate the need to reset the LSR's audio/visual equipment and might also provide for a larger screen for banquet attendees to view.

If there is an in-house audio/visual system, first determine if there is a fee for use of the system by discussing the venue contract with the Convention Chairman and/or Hotel Coordinator. If there is a fee for use of the system, verify with the Convention Treasurer if the expense is included in the conventions budget before making arrangements to use the in-house system. Use of a venue's in-house audio/visual system can sometimes be very expensive and cost prohibitive.

In-house audio/visual systems can sometimes be complex, and require being familiar with how each component works. A Best Practice is do become familiar with the in-house audio/visual system and do a thorough test prior to the Awards Banquet.

It is also important to plan with the Contest Room, Guest Speaker and Convention Photographer the sequence that any pictures will be shown. This includes both the winners from the Contest Room, and possible images the Guest Speaker will want to display. There is also the possibility that the next year's convention Host Group will want to display images during their presentation. Having a PowerPoint presentation prepared in advance of the Awards Banquet will help for a quick and easy transition of each picture to be shown.

Having ques from the Master of Ceremonies, or doing a rehearsal prior to the Awards Banquet, will assist in a synchronized, effortless flow when displaying images.

Determine if the venue has an in-house audio/visual system.

If Yes;

- A. Determine if use of the system is including in the conventions contract and budget.
- B. If yes, get hands-on training from the venues in-house staff on how to use the audio/visual system.
- C. Test the system to verify functionality and ease of use.

If No;

- A. Determine with the conventions Clinic Coordinator when LSR audio/visual equipment can be removed from a clinic room.
- B. Determine with the conventions Hotel Coordinator when the LSR audio/visual equipment can be set-up, once the venue's staff has completed the room set-up for the Awards Banquet.
- C. Set-up the LSR's audio/visual equipment and test to verify everything is working properly.

Verify the Awards Banquet Agenda and prepare all pictures in the sequence that they will be displayed.

Determine when displayed images will be changed based on information from the Convention Chairman, Contest Room, Guest Speaker, and next year's Host Group.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Banquet Audio/Visual Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Discuss with Convention Chairman if use of in-house audio/visual equipment is included in the events contract.		6 months before convention			
Obtain equipment use training from in-house staff.		During convention			
Review banquet agenda and prepare images to be displayed.		After contest room judging			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

BANQUET DECORATIONS and CENTERPIECES

Venues will most often have a complimentary table centerpiece to be used at the Awards Banquet, and some may have various options to choose from. Centerpieces should be low enough so as to not impede the view from across the table and room. An option for the Awards Banquet is to have a convention themed table centerpiece.

If the convention committee decides to create their own centerpiece, an option is having the centerpiece decorations made as one of the Non-Rail activities. It will then be the decision of the individuals to have the centerpieces distributed to banquet attendees, or have returned to the individual that created the centerpiece.

If the convention has opted to have pre-manufactured centerpiece, the convention may decide to present the centerpiece to banquet attendees as some type of drawing. Possible options for consideration are;

- the centerpiece is given to the person at each table with the lowest registration number.
- a ticket is placed at or under each seat, and then numbers are drawn to determine the winners.

If any decorations are planned to be attached to walls, permission must first be obtained from the venue. Many venues prohibit attaching anything to their walls,

If the Host Group will be doing additional decorations at the banquet, coordinate with hotel staff the time period when the decorators can do their work.

Decorations & Center Pieces Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine if convention budget allows for any decorations or centerpieces.			1 year before convention		
Identify a theme that could be used for decorations and centerpieces.			1 year before convention.		
Solicit a supplier for decorations and centerpieces.			6 months before convention		
Review decorations and centerpieces presentation with Hotel Coordinator and Banquet Coordinator.			2 months before convention.		
Take items to venue. Assist with set-up.			Beginning of convention.		

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

PRINTING

Printed materials for a LSR convention are important as they can answer who, what, where, when, why and how questions before they are asked. Information is power, and providing convention attendees extensive convention information will give them the power to have a wonderful convention experience. There are several components to consider for printing, that include marketing, registration, and information during the convention. Since the Timetable is an extremely important part of the convention experience, the Convention Planning Guide has a separate section dedicated for the Timetable.

Information to consider for convention printing projects are;

- Get competitive bids for all printing projects. The costs can vary from \$0.10 to \$0.60 per page for the identical printed item. This can save a lot of money.
- Pre-convention advertising flyer and posters to be distributed and displayed at division and club meetings.
- Convention Information Booklet Timetable Schedule -- Since this is a major expense, off-set the cost by selling advertising pages or by accepting contributions from sponsors.
- Layout tours, prototype tours, and operating sessions maps/directions.
- Tickets for tours that require a purchase for the tour.
- Manual convention registration forms
- Clinic Signs
- Banquet tickets
- Name Badges
- Hallway and room posters
- Contest room voting ballots

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Printing Coordinator Responsibilities–Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Create Manual Convention Registration form.		1 year before convention			
Obtain minimum three (3) bids for Name Badge printing.		1 year before convention			
Create Map/Directions to Layouts on Layout Tour		6 months before convention			
Create Map/Directions to Layout for Operating Sessions		6 months before convention			
Create Posters for distribution to local hobby shops.		6 months before convention			
Create signs for Clinic Rooms, Contest and Non-Rail rooms.		3 months before convention			
Submit attendees list to vendor for Printing Names Badges		1 month before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Timetable

In important part of every Lone Star Region (LSR) regional convention is the Timetable. The Timetable should include information on important aspects of the regional convention. Timetables can either be on a single sheet of high-quality paper or in a pamphlet form.

If using a single sheet for the Timetable, all of the important parts of the convention should be included, such as;

- convention agenda
- clinic schedule with dates, times, name of clinic and clinician and location of each clinic
- information of layout tours including dates and time that each location is open to visitors, name of railroad and railroad owner, and address of layout.
- a “welcome” notation from the convention chairman
- a listing of Host Group key individuals, with their assignment, that were instrumental in creating the regional convention.
- Information on tours, if applicable

This is a lot of information to include on a single sheet of paper, and creates extreme limitations that can be provided to convention attendees. Single sheet Timetables are not encouraged.

A preferred format for a convention Timetable is a booklet, either with staple (signature) or spiral binding. In no particular order, portions of the Timetable could include;

- Front cover that clearly identifies the convention. It is recommended to include “National Model Railroad Association, Lone Star Region” as well as information directly relating to the annual convention.
- Table of Contents
- Convention Chairman’s Welcome
- Host Group Convention Committee – list of names and responsibilities
- Special Guests – could be clinicians from outside of the LSR, NMRA officers, manufacturers, etc.
- Banquet Keynote Speaker / presentation summary
- On-Site Registration Information
- General Information Policies Information
- Door Prizes and Raffle Information
- Contest Room Information
- Non-Rail Activities
- Layout Tours Information
- Meetings
- Awards Banquet Information
- Clinics Information
- Silent Auction Information
- White Elephant Sale Information
- Convention Sponsors Information
- LSR Officers, Directors and Chairs listing
- Gantt Chart Convention Schedule
- Venue Map

Following are suggestions/samples for the aforementioned items for inclusion in the Timetable. There is also a sample Timetable 4”x11” template of the LSR Google Drive to help assist with the planning/preparation of the conventions Timetable.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - TIMETABLE

Registration Desk

Convention registration is located at _____.

Hours of operation

Days, and Dates From and To Times On-Site Registration Desk is open.

Suggestions: On Thursday, have registration open two to three hours before convention activities begin to be prepared as attendees arrive. On Friday and Saturday, have registration desk open one hour before convention activities begin. The earlier that registration check-in is open will help to minimize a rush and volunteer staff from being overwhelmed.

Policies

Refunds

Registration refunds after _____ will only be considered for unavoidable circumstances, on a case-by-case basis.

Names Badges and Security

Every individual registered to attend the convention will be issued a convention badge. The badge is your admission ticket to all non-extra fare convention activities and must be prominently displayed at all times that you are in the convention area, participating in a tour and layout visits. Any individual not wearing a convention badge at any of the convention activities will be asked to leave. In this way, the convention badge provides a general level of security by permitting effective exclusion of those that are not associated with the convention.

Individuals registering for one or two days will be issued a unique badge valid for one or two days only. Day Pass attendees will receive full convention non-extra fare benefits only for the days which they are registered.

Lost badges will be replaced at the On-Site Registration Desk located at _____. If you find a badge, please return it to the Conventions On-Site Registration Desk.

Lost and Found

Please take any lost item that you find to the Conventions On-Site Registration Desk located at _____.

Age Limits

Youth ages up to 18 years old must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times during all convention activities.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all parts of the convention location name hotel and at layout locations.

Unacceptable Behavior

The Convention Committee reserves the right to eject any person or persons from any convention activity if their behavior represents conduct that is objectionable in the opinion of the Host Committee or an officer of the Lone Star Region. Persons ejected from a convention activity will not receive a refund.

Door Prizes

The convention name is delighted to announce the following companies have donated door prizes for convention attendees. We are extremely grateful to each company for their support.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - TIMETABLE

Then list a minimum of each company's names. If door prizes are donated by local hobby shops, could include address and website information.

Contest Room or Celebration of Models

The *convention name* Contest Room is in the _____ room, located on the ____ floor. All rules and entry forms are available there and on the NMRA website at www.nmra.org/contests. All required forms should be completed prior to bringing your entry to the Contest Room.

Contest Room Timetable

Thursday, *Date* _____:00pm to _____:00pm

Drop off your models and photos.

Friday, *Date* _____:00am to _____:00pm

Drop off your models and photos.

Browse the displays and fill out your ballot for The People's Choice Awards. Balloting closes at _____:00pm.

Friday, *Date* _____:00pm

Contest Room closed for judging.

Saturday, *Date* _____:00am to _____:00pm

Contest Room is open for viewing.

Saturday, *Date* _____:00pm to _____:00pm

Pick up Contest Room entries.

All models must be picked up by the owner.

The contests are judged using the Achievement Program Judging Guidelines, as published on the NMRA website. The judging panel is divided into teams, with each team judging one of the five judging categories: Construction, Detail, Conformity, Finish and Lettering, and Scratch Building.

Coordinate with LSR Regional Contest Room Chairman for the times for Contest Room scheduling.

Non-Rail Activities

Room name(s) will be used as the Non-Rails Gathering / Activities room. This room will be open, during the convention, for Non-Rail / General Interest attendees to gather and socialize, except when a scheduled clinic or craft event is occurring.

The Non-Rails activity room will be closed during the lunch and dinner breaks.

Hours:

Thursday, *Date* _____ to _____

Friday, *Date* _____ to _____

Saturday, *Date* _____ to _____

Coordinate with the LSR Regional Non-Rail Chairman for times when the Non-Rails room will be open. Non-Rails Chairman might also have specific events that could be listed in the Timetable.

Layouts

Visiting Layouts Etiquette

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - TIMETABLE

The following is a short list of rules of conduct that we ask people visiting layouts to follow:

- All layouts are NON-SMOKING. If you must smoke outside, please move away from other visitors, and discard your cigarette or cigar butts properly.
- Never pick up someone else's model.
- Never lean on a layout.
- Don't touch, scratch, feel, or move anything. If you lack self-control, put your hands in your pockets. If you are curious about something, simply ask your host. Respect the host's property, both inside and outside.
- Do not dominate the host's time or the best viewing areas. Others may have questions or comments and want to see the best area too.
- If you wish to take photos or videos of the layout, ask the host for permission. It is rarely refused, but if the host is reluctant, put the camera away. Do not allow your filming to monopolize the best viewing areas or interfere with others' views and movements.
- Do not ask the host to use their bathroom.
- Self-Driving Tours BEGIN and END at the stated tour times. Attempting to visit a layout before or after the scheduled time is strictly prohibited.

At check-in for the convention, you should have received a handout listing layouts for self-guided visits with addresses, contact information, and the days and times they will be open.

For each layout, list:

Layout owners name

Layout scale

Name of layout

Physical Address of layout.

Dates and times that layout is available for viewing. (not in Timetable, only on layout sheet)

A brief description of the layout

A Ride-Share sign-up sheet is available at the Conventions On-Site Registration Desk.

Access information – where to park, where to enter and possible access requirements. i.e. requires going up a flight of stairs

Meetings

All meetings are open to all NMRA members.

Lone Star Region Board of Directors Meeting

Day, Date __:00_m to __:00_m Location

Lone Star Region General Membership Meeting

Day, Date __:00_m to __:00_m Location

May need to coordinate meeting dates, times and locations with Clinic Coordinator and Non-Rail Coordinator.

Awards Banquet

Location, date and time

Agenda to include;

Reception 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Dinner 7:00pm

Invocation by _____

Guest Speaker Information

Youth Awards

Names of recipients and divisions they are from

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - TIMETABLE

Freitag Award
President's Award
Contest Awards
20__ Convention

Coordinate with Texas Gulf Division 8
Coordinate with LSR President
Coordinate with LSR Contest Chairman
Presentation by next year's Convention Chairman

Clinics

Information to be provided by the Clinic Coordinator. Information should include;

Clinic Topic

Clinicians Name

Date, time, and location of clinic

A brief description of the clinic

TIMETABLE

- *The final convention schedule or timetable is to be developed two (2) months preceding the start of the convention so that printing can be completed and checked with sufficient time for corrections.*
- Develop project time-lines (Gantt charts) for establishing critical start times and then maintaining coordination, control, and preventing overlaps.
- The schedule should be prepared using a commonly available computer program, such as Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Word, so it can be electronically distributed and by hard copy for use by various chairpersons and convention personnel.
- Maintaining the master schedule is basically a one-person job to avoid conflicts.
- Samples of effective convention schedule and program booklets are available for as examples. Contact the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman for examples.
- Sell advertising space to sponsors to help pay for the Timetable schedule booklet.
- Convention schedule and program booklet should be a size that will conveniently fit into a back pocket or a purse.
- Changes which occur after booklets printing should be prominently displayed on the lobby bulletin boards. Supplemental sheets may need to be included in the registration packet or placed at the Registration Desk and outside of clinic rooms.

A sample template for a Convention Timetable is available on the LSR Google Drive. Information that will be included in a conventions Timetable will ultimately be determined by each convention's activities and the information that the Host Group decides to include in the Timetable.

When discussing Timetable arrangements with commercial printers, one sheet of paper with printing on both sides is considered 4 pages. Therefore, Timetables are printed in increments of 4 pages, plus the cover.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Timetable Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine format of inclusions in Timetable.		1 year before convention			
Solicit minimum three (3) bids from vendors for Timetable printing.		1 year before convention			
Obtain information from Chairman, Clinics, Layouts, Operating Sessions, Hotel/Banquet Coordinator.		3 months before convention			
Submit to printer		6 weeks before convention			
Provide Timetables to Welcome Bag preparation volunteers.		1 week before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Contest Room

A part of every Lone Star Region (LSR) Convention is the Contest Room. The Contest Room is a combined effort of both the LSR and the Host Group. The Host Group is responsible for securing a meeting room for the Contest Room and coordinating the room set-up with the venue, providing volunteers for security, personnel to man the Contest Room when open and working with the LSR Contest Chair for judges in the Contest Room. The LSR has a Contest Room Division that will provide the primary judges, and computer hardware, and the Host Group will also be responsible for helping to secure additional contest room judges.

The Contest Room will need to be able to accommodate;

- Approximately twenty (20) to thirty (30) 6' x 30" tables, or fifteen (15) to twenty-two (22) 8' x 30 tables. If a venue only has 18" wide tables, tables will need to be doubled-up to create tables 36" wide. There are twenty-three (23) different categories for Contest Room entries and sufficient space needs to be available for each category, along with their corresponding paperwork. In larger cities where a higher number of entries might take place, it is possible that more tables will be needed. Display tables in the Contest Room generally do not have tablecloths / covers.
- When possible, minimum 6' wide aisles to allow attendees to view the entries in the Contest Room without being crowded. In the case of the Contest Room, there is no such thing as too much space.
- Two tables with four chairs for Contest Room Registration. These tables will need to have easy access to an electrical outlet, as all entries will need to be entered into a computer program, and when applicable, Merit Certificates will need to be printed. These tables will need to be staffed by the Host Group during all times that entries are being accepted into the Contest Room.
- One table at the room entrance to hold purses, camera straps, and any other items that could dangle and possibly cause damage to the items on display in the Contest Room.
- Six additional chairs.

Local volunteers will be needed to fulfill the duties of "security" and Contest Room registration during the times that the Contest Room is open to the convention attendees. Volunteers will also be required to serve as judges.

Duties for security will include;

- Having individuals entering the Contest Room to leave any items that might cause damage to the Contest Room entries at a table at the room's entrances. Items such as purse straps and camera straps could sway while an entry is being viewed, and could damage to the entries.
- Making sure that none of the entries are touched in anyway. Modelers put a significant amount of time and energy into the entries. Something as simple as fingerprints could have a negative impact on an entry. Also, many entries consist of very fragile parts, which could easily be broken.
- Making sure that no entries leave the Contest Room. Unfortunately, entries have "gone missing" in the past.

Duties for registration include;

- Using the conventions registrations to send out invitations for convention attendees to participate in the Contest Room. This should begin well before the convention and through-out the time leading to the convention.
- Make sure that all LSR Contest Entry forms are completed in-full before being accepted.

Qualifications to be a Contest Room Judge are;

- Junior Judge – a judge in training, defined as a person that has not judged all five (5) categories in a regional contest room.
- Judge – defined as a person that has judged all five (5) categories in a regional Contest Room.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – CONTEST

- Senior Judge – defined as a person that has judged all five (5) categories plus two (2) more for a total of seven (7) categories.
- Additional information can be found on the www.LoneStarRegion.com website.

When the Contest Room is not open to the convention attendees, and during the final judging, entry into the Contest Room is not permitted. Staff from the venue is also not permitted to enter the Contest Room when it is not open. A key to secure the Contest Room entrance will be required for the Contest Room personnel to unlock and lock the door as needed.

Final judging in the Contest Room will begin on Friday afternoon/evening, and depending on the number of judges and entries, could go into the early morning hours. This needs to be addressed when searching for a venue for the LSR convention, and reminded to the venue staff at the beginning of the convention. Having time limit restraints for the judges to be able to access the Contest Room could present a need for the final judging process to be rushed, and not allow the judge's to thoroughly complete the judging process.

As part of the Convention Registration process, it is important that all registrants be provided with a registration number. The registration number is to be printed on the attendee's name badge, as discussed in the "Registration" portion of this Convention Planning Guide. The Contest Room personnel will need a roster of all convention registrants prior to the Contest Room being opened, which includes both the registrant's name and registration number.

Volunteer judges are always welcome to participate in the Contest Room judging. By participating in the judging process, volunteers will have the opportunity to become more familiar with the process as well as to learn about the details that it takes to create an award-winning model.

Contest Room entry forms, rules, and score sheets are all available on the LSR website, LoneStarRegion.com, in the Contest Info section. The LSR Contest Entry form should be completed for each entry before entries are brought into the Contest Room. Although not required, a supply of blank entry forms can be available for individuals that have failed to bring their completed form(s).

The Lone Star Region will provide all Awards and Plaques that will be handed out to contest winners. Costs involved in Awards and Plaques are the responsibility of the LSR, not the Host Group.

Items used in the Contest Room are an expense of the Lone Star Region. To qualify for reimbursement, original receipts will be required. No receipt, no reimbursement.

As individuals express an interest in providing an entry, they should be sent a LSR Contest Entry Form, or advised to access and complete the form at www.LoneStarRegion.com. In the event that an individual arrives without a pre-prepared entry form, blank forms should be readily available in the Contest Room. Additionally, there are Judges Scoring Sheets and other valuable information on the regions website that can be helpful for individuals making entries into the Contest Room.

CONTESTS

- A separate section contained in this LSR Convention Guide contains a discussion about running a silent auction. It is required reading for the auction personnel.
- The contest room should be 1,000 square feet or larger, with a minimum of 750 square feet, to accommodate 20 to 30 display tables for 100 entries. Determine if there are additional charges for this high number of tables. Because of the necessity of tight security, access to the room should be limited to one lockable door.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – CONTEST

- Tables should be the typical 30” in width by 72” or 96” in length. Tabletop covers are not generally necessary and should not be included as a part of the room set-up, unless the venues tabletops are damaged. A diagram should be provided to the hotel showing the desired room and table set-up for the Contest Room prior to the beginning of the convention.
- Two tables with electrical access and ten chairs will be needed for judges and room personnel.
- Particularly good lighting is essential for contest judging, determine if additional lights or lighting is needed, such as light-weight photography lights on stands to achieve this. Check with the hotel from a cost standpoint, do not rent these from the hotel. However, determine if the hotel has any restrictions or additional electrical use charges for such additional lighting or contest entry lighting.
- The Host Group has the responsibility to provide personnel all day Thursday, Friday, and at such other times as directed by the Regional Contest Chairman and Convention Chairman to log in entries, assure placement at appropriate locations, and provide security. The room should be open for viewing entries through Saturday morning and possibly Saturday afternoon.
- VERY IMPORTANT The Contest Room must never be left unattended and must be securely locked when closed.
- The LSR Contest Committee has the responsibility for operation of the Contest Room, securing the primary judges for the entries, judging, award preparation, and presentations at the banquet. They are not responsible for the security addressed previously. Judging is customarily done on Friday afternoon and night and requires considerable hours by up to a dozen people. There should not be a limitation imposed by the venue for when the Contest Room must be vacated on Friday night/Saturday morning. Also, take into consideration when planning other activities so the judges can attend these other events.
- Even though the LSR Contest Committee being responsible for securing the primary judges, the convention Host Group should also be prepared to provide contest room judges. All contest room activities are subject to cancellation if there are not enough judges for the contest room, as noted in the LSR By-Laws.
- Detailed procedures governing the contest are available from the Regional Contest Chairman and LSR website.
- Enforce contest entry control procedures to assure all entry and achievement program forms are completed thoroughly at the time the entry is submitted.
- Claim check procedures for all entries must be followed without exception. At the bottom of each LSR Contest Entry Form is a Claim Check that must be completed for every entry, and given to the individual making the entry into the Contest Room. The Claim Check will be required for an individual to pick up their entry at the end of the Contest Room activities.
- Constant security must be provided starting at the beginning of the convention until the last entry is picked up, at the pre-determined time for pick-up.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – CONTEST

- Door locking and other security arrangements must be made with venue personnel and then routinely checked to assure compliance. Verify with the venue that the room will **not** be left open when not being used for a cleaning crew, nor will the cleaning crew enter the room during the convention. Coordinate this with the convention Security Chief and the venue's security staff.
- The official convention photographer, who should also be qualified in close-up model photography, will take photographs of the winning entries immediately after judging while the contest room is closed.
- Plaques, trophies, ribbons, special awards, etc. are provided by the LSR at no cost to the Host Group. If the Host Group decides to do a special contest for the convention, the convention will be responsible for the cost of the award for the special contest. After the convention, some awards may need to be engraved and mailed to recipients.
- The Regional Contest Chairman, with the help of the Host Group, will prepare an article for *The Marker Lamp* after the convention listing first, second, and third place winners in each category and special awards and thanking everyone who assisted in running the contests.
- As a part of the convention registration process, it is important that all registrants are assigned with a registration number. The attendee's registration number will need to be printed on their name badge (as discussed in the Registration portion of the Convention Planning Guide).

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Contest Coordinator Responsibilities – Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Communicate with the LSR Regional Contest Room Chairman to discuss Contest Room activities / requirements.		1 year before convention			
Coordinate with the Convention Chairman and LSR Non-Rail Chair for a special theme for contest room themed entries.		1 year before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / webpage one year before the convention announcing the “special” category and any available information. Submit to the Convention Chairman.		1 year before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / webpage ten months before the convention with updated information and encouragement for entries in the Contest Room. Submit to the Convention Chairman.		10 months before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / webpage seven months before the convention with updated information and encouragement for entries in the Contest Room. Submit to the Convention Chairman.		7 months before convention			
Recruit volunteers for judging. The Contest Room Chair will need to be sent a list of volunteers generated by the Host Group.		3 months before convention			
Determine and purchase special presentation awards.		2 months before convention			
Coordinate with the Convention Hotel Coordinator table setup for the Contest Room.		1 month before convention			
Coordinate and schedule personnel to volunteer in the Contest Room.		1 month before convention			
Train all scheduled volunteers on proper logging in of entries.		1 month before convention			
Train all scheduled volunteers on proper claim check procedures for entry pickup.		During convention			
Enforce entry control procedures to assure all entry and achievement program forms are completed thoroughly at the time that the entry is submitted.		During convention			
Verify that Regional Photographer Chair will be present to take photographs.		During convention / after judging			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Contest Coordinator Responsibilities – Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Complotted	Comments
Door locking and other security arrangements must be made with the hotel personnel and then routinely checked to assure compliance. Coordinate this with the Security Chief.		During convention			
The LSR Contest Room Chair will provide place cards for each category.		During Convention			
Present awards at the banquet.		At Awards Banquet			
Have photos to display award winning entries at the banquet.		At Awards Banquet			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website one month after the convention with results from the Contest Room and thanks to all volunteers. Submit to Convention Chairman.		1 month after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

ARTS and CRAFTS CONTEST and AWARDS

The Host Group has the option to have an Arts & Crafts Contest as a part of the convention and Contest Room. A theme is recommended, and entries can be of any type item / construction, as long as they tie in with the theme. Themes are often based on the convention's immediate location, or the general scenery / geography of the Lone Star Region in general, although any theme can be used.

When a special Arts & Crafts contest is to take place, it is important to publicize information about the contest far in advance. Participants will need enough time to prepare their entry. Publicity can be done by articles in *The Marker Lamp*, email blasts to the LSR members, and/or a special email sent to convention registrants, particularly those that include a Non-Rail registration.

Consider a theme for the Arts & Crafts Contest. The theme could tie into the convention name or location. Publicize the theme as far in advance as possible to allow contest participants enough time to prepare their entries.

The entries for this activity will be located in the same room as the railroad model entries.

Coordinate with LSR Contest Chairman for all activities, judging, etc.

Convention Arts & Crafts Contest and Awards Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine a theme for the Arts & Crafts contest category.		1 year before convention			
Provide information to Publicity Coordinator to promote.		Ongoing			
Submit article to <i>The Maker Lamp</i> to promote participation.		1 year before convention			
Submit article to <i>The Maker Lamp</i> to promote participation.		10 months before convention			
Submit article to <i>The Maker Lamp</i> to promote participation.		7 months before convention			
Submit article to <i>The Maker Lamp</i> to promote participation.		4 months before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

CONTEST AWARDS

Contest ribbons, plaques, awards, achievement program plaques and other presentations are the responsibility of the LSR. The primary expenses are not charged to the Host Group.

A convention has the option of having a “Convention Special Category”.

- If the requirements for the “Convention Category” are determined by the LSR Regional Contest Chairman, the expense for the “Convention Special Category” award will be paid for by the LSR.
- If the requirements for the “Convention Category” are determined by the Host Group, the expense for the “Convention Special Category” award will be considered a convention expense.

Coordinate displays and presentation plans with the Convention Chairman, Convention Photographer, Banquet Coordinator, LSR Contest Room Chair and Banquet Audio-Visual Coordinator.

Convention Contest Awards Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Task	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Coordinate with LSR Contest Chair what awards and type will be needed.			6 months before convention		
Determine source to provide contest awards			6 months before convention		

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

CONVENTION PHOTOGRAPHER

The Lone Star Region has a designated Photography Chair, but this individual might not be conveniently located to take photographs in advance of the convention of layouts, local attractions, etc. The Host Group Convention Committee should include a person that will fulfill these responsibilities. In the event that the LSR Photography Chair is unable to attend the regional convention, the Host Group representative should be prepared to take photographs during the convention.

Take pictures of layouts that will be a part of layout visits and operating sessions.

Take pictures of tour destinations and area points of interest.

Provide pictures to the Host Groups Publicity Coordinator for inclusion in articles of *The Marker Lamp*.

Take action pictures throughout the convention of clinics, layouts, contests, auctions, Non-Rail activities, banquet activities, award presentations and speakers, special guests, and business meeting.

Official convention photographer, who should also be qualified in close-up model photography, will take photographs of Contest Room winning entries immediately after judging while the contest room is closed.

Assist Convention Chairman and LSR Contest Room Chair in preparing selected photographs for publication in each issue of *The Marker Lamp*.

Convention Photographer Responsibilities – Check-Off Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Work with Publicity Coordinator to provide photographs for; Rail Tours Non-Rail Tours Layout Tours Operating Session layouts		1 year before convention			
Take candid action photos during convention.		During convention			
Take photographs of contest room winners.		Friday night / Saturday morning of convention			
Provide Banquet A/V Coordinator with photographs of contest room first place winners.		Day of banquet			
Send photographs of all contest room award winners to <i>The Marker Lamp</i> editor.		1 month after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

LAYOUT TOURS

Layout tours can be an enticing part of a LSR convention. Layouts do not have to have 100% complete construction or scenery, but careful selection of layouts should be made to determine if they will be of interest to the visitors to the layouts.

For conventions that do not have layouts in close proximity to the convention's location, consider arranging for layouts that can be visited on the way to the convention on Thursday, or after the convention on Sunday.

Layout Tours

- Line up many layouts a year before the convention so layout owners can get the layouts ready.
- Provide a variety of scales and types. Garden railroads and 7 ½ inch large scale “riding size” are becoming popular.
- Reconfirm all tours and open hours one month out and again just before the convention starts. Post on the convention's lobby bulletin board any last-minute changes that occur after the convention timetable programs or Welcome Bag inserts are printed.
- Develop an interesting description of each layout. These could include: railroad name, scale, size, era and railroad names modeled, control system (Easy DCC, NCE), car handling (car cards, Rail Op, etc.) unusual features, driving instructions, layout location on premises (e.g., enter house by side door or garage), hours and days open, parking information etc. Provide owner's phone information for “lost” drivers. These are to be included in the convention registration packet.
- It is very important that the descriptions and pictures of each layout are posted on the convention's website no later than six months before the convention for early trip planners. This information should also be given to the conventions Publicity Coordinator.
- Prepare accurate maps which should be test-driven by someone not very familiar with the area to check for understandability. GPS routes should be checked since sometimes they select impractical or inaccurate routes. Last-minute road changes or corrections should be noted on the convention lobby bulletin board and possibly insert correction sheets in the registration packets.
- Provide sign-up sheets for ride-sharing on convention lobby bulletin board starting on Thursday.
- Provide tour stand-by lists for prescheduled events at registration desk.
- Provide railroad crossbucks at each layout. These should be uniform in appearance to aid the visitor in spotting them when driving in an unfamiliar territory. For those who do not already have these signs, they will need to be made and delivered. Sufficient lead-time may be needed for this construction. Be sure to keep the individual costs down since possibly 30 to 40 crossbucks may be needed.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Layout Tours Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Identify local layouts available for layout tour.		1 year before convention.			
Coordinate with Convention Photographer to take pictures of layouts. Submit to Publicity coordinator and Webmaster.		1 year before convention			
Obtain layouts information for website and Timetable.		1 year before convention			
Confirm layouts before Timetable is printed.		3 months before convention			
Prepare directions to layouts and submit to Printing Coordinator.		1 month before convention			
Provide Crossbucks to layout owners.		1 week before convention			
Work with On-Site Registration for Ride Share sign-up sheet.		During convention			
Have easels and dry-erase board available to announce any last-minute changes.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

PROTOTYPE TOURS

The inclusion of Prototype Tours as a part of a LSR convention can add interest and additional convention registrations. Remember that most destinations are not usually open to the general public, and special permission must be obtained to visit a prototype location. Detailed information must be obtained concerning maximum attendance, safety criteria, and access.

Prototype Tours

- Schedule many months in advance since these are tours of business operations.
- **Confirm details of tours with the facilities one month and again two (2) weeks before convention.**
- Determine the maximum number of people the business will accept at one time and in total.
- Determine if the facility has any safety, special clothing, shoe requirements, etc. Be sure these are plainly displayed on the convention website and in the convention timetable. Finally, the assigned tour guide must check each individual just before the tour, preferably at the hotel before boarding the bus when applicable, to avoid denied admission at the tour site.
- If buses are to be provided, determine total costs and other contractual details. Investigate the bus company's accident record, available at fmcsa.dot.gov/passenger-safety/bus-safety-search, and insurance coverage. Get a formal contract with the bus company and review it with the Convention Chairman and Regional Conventions Chairman before signing. A deposit is generally required to secure the transportation contract.
- Determine how many buses are needed for each event and if multiple tours can be run by the same bus. For example, can the bus take a load to one tour destination and then another load to another event, and then return for pick-up of first tour thus avoiding a bus sitting, with the meter running, while a tour is going on.
- Determine where buses are to be loaded and unloaded at the hotel. Provide lobby signs advising loading times and locations.
- Verify all arrangements with the bus company two (2) weeks before the convention.
- Determine the last-minute cut-off date for arranging the number of buses.
- If tour registrations do not justify a large bus, determine if a smaller bus can be utilized. Private vehicles cannot be used for Prototype Tours.
- Provide tour guides for each bus to assure destinations, schedules and regulations are maintained.
- Assure tour guides are familiar with how to get to the destination, entry points, parking requirements, and on-site contact personnel. On the ride to the site, the guide should provide information about the company and its railroad related operations.
- Provide sign-up sheets at Reservation Desk for standbys in the event of cancellations.
- If water and/or refreshments are to be provided, be sure to budget for them and include the additional cost in the tour charge, as well as providing room on the bus for water and/or refreshments.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Prototype Tours Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Research possible Prototype Tours interests and discuss with Convention Chairman.		1 year before convention			
Research days and hours of operations, maximum attendance, and required safety equipment.		1 year before convention			
With Bus Charter Transportation Coordinator, determine expense of transportation.		1 year before convention			
With Convention Chairman and Treasurer, determine tour costs.		1 year before convention			
Send contracts to LSR Convention Committee for review and approval.		1 year before convention			
Identify pick-up and drop-off locations at hotel and tour destination.		6 months before convention			
Recruit tour guides.		6 months before convention			
Verify Tour Guides have information on destination to share with tour attendees enroute to destination.		2 months before convention			
Verify Tour Guides are familiar with travel route to destination.		1 month before convention			
Confirm tour destination arrangements two weeks before convention.		2 weeks before convention			
Confirm bus arrangements two weeks before convention.		2 weeks before convention			
Obtain water and ice for bus ride, if factored into tour price.		1 week before convention			
Have sign-up sheet at on-site registration to fill any vacancies in the event of cancellations.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

NON-RAIL TOURS

The inclusion of Non-Rail tours during a regional convention provides a benefit to individuals that might not be interested in railroad related activities, and to generate additional convention registrations. Unique or fun points of interest create an appeal for Non-Rails participation. Even though the LSR has a designated individual to coordinate Non-Rail activities, having a local representative as part of the Host Group Convention Committee can assist and enlighten the LSR Chair of possible tours that the Non-Rail convention attendees would enjoy.

Non-Rail Tours

- A lady chairperson is preferred to be selected.
- At the LSR convention immediately prior to the forthcoming convention, the Non-Rail Chairlady presents the descriptions about the Non-Rail primary events.
- It is *essential to have backup plans*.
- Registration forms provide information on tours and costs. Pre-registration is critical to determine bus or other transportation needs.
- Determine how many people a business or tour site can accommodate.
- Local news and television programs can provide many interesting ideas on places, people, and things in the local area.
- Transportation needs are a most critical element in this activity. Coordinate with counterpart Prototype Tours chairperson to determine if a bus can be shared to a bus sitting idle with the meter running.
- Reconfirm all tours and open hours just before convention. Post any changes on the lobby bulletin board that occur after the programs are printed.
- Refer to the Prototype Tours portion of this manual for other suggestions.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Non-Rails Tours Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine points of interest.		1 year before convention			
Identify dates and times, admission fees and maximum number of attendees permitted.		1 year before convention			
Work with Transportation Coordinator to determine cost of charter transportation.		1 year before convention			
Advise Registrar of cost of Non-Rail Tours and maximum available participation.		1 year before convention			
Provide Publicity Coordinator information about Non-Rail Tours for inclusion in <i>The Maker Lamp</i>		1 year before convention			
Provide Publicity Coordinator information about Non-Rail Tours for inclusion in <i>The Maker Lamp</i>		10 months before convention			
Provide Publicity Coordinator information about Non-Rail Tours for inclusion in <i>The Maker Lamp</i>		7 months before convention			
Provide Publicity Coordinator information about Non-Rail Tours for inclusion in <i>The Maker Lamp</i>		4 months before convention			
Confirm all tours.		2 weeks before convention.			
Post any last-minute changes at on-site registration desk.		During convention			
Advise on-site registration desk if any vacancies are available for purchase.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

BUS TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR

The use of chartered buses requires a thorough review of bus company pricing and stipulations, particularly change and/or cancellation policies. It can be difficult to predetermine if a tour will have sufficient attendance to justify the expense of hiring a bus and low attendance for a tour that does not have a reasonably good change/cancellation policy could have a negative impact on the financial success of a regional convention.

- Determine if convention tours will require hiring Motor Coaches.
- Solicit bids from area Motor Coach Companies.
- Review the bids to determine the best options for the convention.
- Work with the Convention Chairman and Convention Treasurer to determine the cost for each tour. A “Motor Coach Itinerary & Budget” spreadsheet is available on the LSR Google Drive to assist with tour scheduling and pricing.
- Before executing any contract, provide the contract information to the Host Group Convention Chairman and the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman. All contracts must be approved by the LSR Board of Directors before being executed.
- Identify if the tour destination requires any safety apparel, i.e. hard hats, steel-toes shoes, slip-resistant shoes, safety goggles, etc. If yes, determine if any of these items will be issued at the tour destination or if individuals will need to provide their own. Make sure to communicate safety requirements with the Publicity Coordinator, Webmaster, Registrar and Tour Captains. These should be advertised in advance of the tour, when registration for the tour is first made available.
- Identify if the tour destination has any clothing restrictions, such as open toes shoes, high heels, skirts, loose fitting clothing, etc.
- Identify if the tour destination has any mobility limitations, i.e. tight space, stairs, etc. If yes, make sure to communicate mobility concerns with the Publicity Coordinator, Webmaster, Registrar and Tour Captains. These should be advertised in advance.
- Communicate with Convention Registrar and Convention Webmaster to have tour(s) ready for purchase. Make sure to have maximum capacity controls in place based on bus size or tour destination to prevent overselling of a tour.
- Provide tour information to the Conventions Publicity Coordinator to promote tour sales.
- Create a ticket system for individuals that have purchased tour tickets. Different colors of paper can be used to differentiate one tour from another. Tour name and boarding date and time should be printed on all tickets.
- Some destinations might need to break down the bus capacity into smaller groups. When required, add a Group A, Group B, etc. onto tour tickets.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – BUS TRANSPORTATION

- Obtain list of individuals that have purchased tours from the Convention Registrar, and provide the list and tickets to the individuals that are preparing the Welcome Envelops.
- Work with Convention Volunteer Coordinator to obtain a Tour Captain for each tour. Tour Captains need to be familiar with the route to the destination(s) and details about the tour destination(s).
- If desired, coordinate the purchase of bottled water and ice for each tour. Recruit individuals to provide the loan of ice chests. Expense for these items should be included when creating the budget/cost for each tour.
- Determine where buses will pick-up and drop off convention attendees. Based on the size of the buses, determine how many buses can use the area at the same time. Coordinate the bus arrival and boarding times to avoid any congestion in the loading area.
- Determine where tour participants will gather before boarding.
- Recruit volunteers to load ice chests onto buses, if applicable.
- Instruct Bus Captains to check for tickets as people board the bus, verifying that each individual has purchased a ticket, and that they are on the correct bus.

Convention Bus Transportation Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine dates, times and number of buses needed for tours.		18 months before convention			
Become familiar with the Motor Coach Tour Buses section of the Convention Planning Guide.		18 months before convention			
Verify tour bus access and parking to all tour destinations based on bus size.		18 months before convention			
Obtain bids from tour bus operations.		18 months before convention			
Using the Motor Coach Itinerary & Budget spreadsheet, work with the convention chairman and treasurer		18 months before convention			
Get updates from convention Registrar for quantity of tour purchases.		Ongoing			
Based on timeline in tour bus contracts, modify bus size or cancel bus if needed, if permitted.		Based on bus contracts			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Motor Coach Tour Buses

An optional activity during a Lone Star Region annual convention is to have group tours, arranged by the Host Group. Tours might be for either Rails or Non-Rails. It is important to note that neither the NMRA nor LSR insurance covers the use of private vehicles. A rental van, driven by an individual, is considered a private vehicle. If a convention Host Group is going to include group tours, renting a Motor Coach might be a solution. However, the motor coach rental cost might make it unreasonable, so it is important to consider all aspects of a group tour, and the contract with a bus company.

When planning a group tour;

- Is the tour destination(s) going to be popular enough to get adequate tour registrations to cover the cost of the tour?
- Can one bus be used for multiple tours? Bus companies will base their charges on time, regardless if the bus is moving or not. If multiple tours can utilize the same bus, both convention expenses and tour ticket prices can be reduced.
- Consider the tour destination(s) and how easy it will be for a tour bus to arrive at the destination(s). A layout tour will require driving through neighborhoods that may have narrow roads or tight turns making it difficult for a large bus to navigate.

When reviewing bus company contracts, the following items should be reviewed and compared.

Cancellation Policy

Some bus companies might have a clause that once a contract is signed, the contract cannot be cancelled. Some companies will have timelines that if a contract is cancelled, there will be a prorated fee based on how far in advance the contract is cancelled.

Bus Size Change

Some bus companies only have one size of bus in their inventory. Others might have various size buses. The buses with fewer seats usually have a higher “per seat” price. When negotiating with tour bus companies, determine if a bus size change can be made if there are not enough ticket sales to justify a larger bus. Bus size changes are subject to a company’s availability of different sized buses. Note: When determining tour ticket pricing, consider budgeting the tour ticket price based on a smaller bus in the event that a smaller bus is needed.

Deposits

Most bus companies will require a deposit once a contract is signed. This would be an up-front convention expense before a tour is publicized. Some companies have a “No Refunds” policy, regardless of when a tour is cancelled.

Time Minimums

Bus companies often have a minimum for the amount of time that a bus can be chartered, often 4 to 5 hours minimum. Will the tour be long enough for the entire minimum time required to rent a bus? Can multiple tours be scheduled using the same bus to fill the minimum time requirement?

Toll Charges

In areas where toll roads are common, bus companies might automatically add a toll charge to their quotes, even though toll roads may not need to be utilized. This is a possible line item to negotiate.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Motor Coach Tour Buses

Fuel Surcharge

A bus company may or may not have an add-on fuel surcharge, possibly subject to change based on fuel prices when the tour actually takes place. There may also be a surcharge for tours that excel a specific number of miles. If a fuel surcharge is applicable, it should be included in the company's quote.

Driver Gratuities

Many companies will require a mandatory gratuity, often based on an hourly rate, to be given to the motor coach drive. The gratuity might not be included in the total quoted price. The gratuity might be asked to be given to the bus driver from the convention. It may be better to provide the drivers gratuity through the bus company. Include the gratuity in the tours budget, and note that the tour includes all taxes and gratuities when being advertised.

Contract Decision Date

A bus company might require that a contract be executed within a specific number of days for the quote to be honored. If additional time is needed, or a significant amount has passed after the decision date, make sure to contact the company to ensure that the original quote is still valid.

Administrative Fee

A company might include an Administrative Fee, in other words, an additional fee for you to provide business for the company, and pay for their infrastructure. This may or may not be negotiable.

It is also recommended to research the safety records for motor coach companies. Information can be found at <https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov>. Depending on how each company is registered with the Department of Transportation, some companies can be researched using their published company name while others will require having the company's DOT number.

To assist in determining costs and timelines for tours that will involve a motor coach rental, a "Motor Coach Itinerary and Budget" spreadsheet is available on the LSR Google Drive. When using the spreadsheet, time units are based on a twenty-four-hour clock (Example – 2:00pm = 14:00). All times need to be entered in a #:## format.

When entering the "Available seats on Motor Coach", only enter the number of seats that will generate revenue. One, sometimes two seats are set aside for the Tour Captain, and the space for two seats might be needed to have an ice chest on the bus. Therefore, if you have a forty-passenger bus, the available number of seats could be thirty-six seats.

Motor Coach companies do not prorate for portions of an hourly rental. If there is a possibility that a tour might last longer than expected, use the "Motor Coach Rental – "what if" hour" row to add the expense of an additional hour and create a cushion in the tour budget.

Ultimately, each tour needs to be priced to have value to convention attendees. When determining the final tour price, consider an amount that will both get as many tickets sold and still make money for the convention.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

RAFFLES, DOOR PRIZES, SPONSORS, CONTRIBUTORS

Having a Raffle and Door Prizes as part of a regional convention can create another layer of excitement to a regional convention. Having Sponsors and Contributors can make this happen, as well as to offset convention expenses.

Raffle, Door Prizes, Sponsors, Contributors

- Secure sponsors and advertisers to help defray convention costs, especially for the purchase of Door Prizes and the printing of the Timetable. It is very important to acknowledge and thank the sponsors and donors.
- Solicit door prizes and raffle items from manufacturers, dealers, hobby shops, individuals, or any other sources. A detailed list of the items and the donors is to be maintained and indicate if convention funds were used to purchase some items. A listing of individuals and companies that donated Door Prizes should be included in the conventions Timetable.
- The Host Group shall retain one-hundred percent (100%) of any convention raffle revenue except in the event the financial activities of the LSR Convention result in a monetary loss. In that event that all incomes regardless of their sources shall be included for the purposes of settling any financial obligations of the Host Group relative to the annual Convention and determining the monetary distributions between the Lone Star Region and the Host Group.
- Sell raffle tickets during registration through Saturday afternoon before the banquet.
- Handle raffle drawings and prizes during the banquet.
- If door prizes are to be provided, every attendee should get a door-prize ticket. Avoid putting door prize tickets in just some of the registration packets. Drawings can be held throughout the convention and/or at the banquet. If drawing take place throughout the convention, post the daily winners on a billboard near the registration desk.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Raffle – Door Prizes – Sponsors Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Obtain any leftover door prizes and supplies from the previous convention.		After prior year's convention			
Obtain door prizes and raffle items from manufacturers, dealers, hobby shops and any other sources.		1 year before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website providing information about door prize sponsors. Submit to Convention Chairman.		10 months before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website with updates of sponsors and items for raffle. Submit to Convention Chairman.		7 months before convention			
Obtain sponsors or advertisers to help defray convention costs.		6 months before convention			
Create an article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website with any last-minute news on sponsorships and raffle items. Submit to Convention Chairman.		4 months before convention			
Develop a tracking system to track raffle sales.		3 months before convention			
Recruit and schedule personnel to man the door prize and raffle counter during the convention.		3 months before convention			
Make sure every convention attendee gets door prize tickets.		1 week before and during convention			
Train volunteers on accounting procedures and any other "special" information.		1 week before convention			
Sell raffle tickets during the convention.		During convention			
Coordinate door prize distribution.		During convention			
Present raffle winners at the awards banquet.		During convention			
Pass on left over door prizes and supplies to the next convention.		After convention			
Create article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> with thanks to those who helped and recognition of sponsors. Submit to Convention Chairman.		1 month after convention			
Submit a financial report to the Convention Chairman and Convention Treasurer.		1 month after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPANY STORE

A convention's Host Group has the option of including a Company Store as a part of a LSR convention. If a Host Group includes a Company Store, all expenses are the responsibility of the Host Group. In turn, the Host Group will retain 100% of the profits, providing that all required convention payments due to the LSR are made.

It is difficult to predetermine the success of a Company Store. To avoid making a large investment in items that may not sell, it is suggested items are first made available for purchase in advance of the convention, and ordered from the production vendor only after sales are confirmed. This will require having a deadline to make purchases so that the items will be available at the convention. The Host Group may also decide to have sample items on display during the convention, and take orders that will be delivered after the conclusion of the convention.

Company Store

- Items offered in the LSR's Company Store are restricted to LSR and NMRA items, such as special cars, plaques, clothing, etc.
- Various historical societies, such as Santa Fe, Katy, Burlington, Chicago and North Western, and Union Pacific, have membership information and items not usually found in hobby shops.
- A separate small room may be desirable; otherwise, a lobby display area could be set up and taken down on daily basis. The lobby display area should be located away from the registration area to avoid congestion.
- Contact NMRA headquarters to determine if a display assortment of the fact sheets, pins, clothing, and numerous other items could be *borrowed* so people could see what is available.
- Determine from previous conventions what will be the realistic number of convention souvenirs that may be sold.
- 100% of the Company Store expenses and sales are the responsibility of and retained by the Host Group in accordance of LSR By-Laws Article V, Section 15.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Company Store Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Obtain convention logo from Convention Chairman.		1 year before convention			
Coordinate with Convention Chairman what items to pursue and color selections.		1 year before convention			
Determine costs of items and deadlines for ordering to have items at convention.		1 year before convention			
Obtain samples and have photos taken for publishing on the website. Pass on to Webmaster / Publicity Chair.		1 year before convention			
Coordinate with Registrar for list of items that can be purchased.		1 year before convention			
Create article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website with any available information and your contact information with company store items and purchase information.		7 months before convention			
Create article for <i>The Marker Lamp</i> / website with any available information and your contact information with company store items and purchase information with purchase deadline.		4 months before convention			
Deliver items to Registrar for distribution of items at convention.		1 week before convention			
If items are to be sold at the convention, coordinate with the Convention Chairman for Company Store tables(s) to display the items.		During convention			
Coordinate with the Convention Treasurer for handling on-site sales funds.		During convention			
Coordinate with Convention Security for safe keeping of items when sales table is not manned.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

OPERATING SESSIONS

- Provide a variety of operating layouts for Wednesday night, Thursday, Friday, or other times as possible to accommodate registrants.
- Restrict the number of operators to a predetermined "first to sign-up" total. Each layout owner is responsible for notifying the Operating Sessions Chairman of the total numbers of operators needed for each individual session and at what date(s) and time(s) their layout will operate.
- To assure that registrants actually show up for an operating session, a \$10.00 deposit from each person for each operating session should be collected as part of the convention registration. This \$10.00 will be refunded in cash to the registrant when he shows up for the operating session. Any unclaimed amounts shall be returned to the convention and accounted for as "shared income for the operating sessions" on the Convention Financial Report, account number 5.31. Refunds are account 5.32. The Operating Session Chairman is responsible for securing the necessary \$10.00 bills from the Convention Treasurer and delivering these bills to the layout owners prior to the operating sessions.
- Provide cancellation list at Registration Desk so replacements can sign up for sessions.
- Verify adequacy of layouts regarding operating interest, well-functioning equipment, and scheduling/control procedures.
- Include description of operating layouts and selection sheet with convention registration.
- Each layout should be manned by a sufficient number of experienced operators to assure smooth operations by inexperienced conventioners who may never have touched a model railroad throttle before.
- Determine number of operators which can be accommodated by layout room and/or operating conditions.
- It is very important to assure that every operator has transportation to and from operating sessions. This should not be left up to the participants since frequently they do not know each other or who has vehicles available. Appoint ride coordinators who will be present at the hotel staging point before every operating session. Provide a sign-up sheet at registration for ride-sharing.
- Transportation and maps should be provided for all operators prior to the beginning of operating sessions/the convention. Out of five operators, nobody may have a car available. Clarity and accuracy of maps should be verified by having persons who are unfamiliar with the locale and actually drive the route. Last minute road changes should be posted in the lobby display.
- Send notifications of session participants, session dates and times, operators' phone and cell numbers to operators two (2) weeks before convention so they can arrange car pools and map out locations on GPS devices.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Operating Sessions Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Recruit layouts for Operating Sessions.		One year before convention			
Determine when Operating Sessions can take place and maximum number of Operators.		One year before convention			
Get write-up for each layout.		One year before convention			
Coordinate with Registrar for Operating Sessions to maximum participants and deposits.		One year before convention			
Provide write-ups to webmaster and Publicity Coordinator.		One year before convention			
Provide Timetable Coordinator information about Operating Session layouts.		6 months before convention			
Create map and directions to Operating layouts.		1 month before convention			
Send notification to Operating Session participants to make transportation arrangements amongst themselves.		2 weeks before convention			
Obtain funds (cash or checks) from Treasurer to give to operating session participants once they arrive for operating sessions.		1 week before convention			
Give appropriate funds to layout owners to give to participants once they arrive for Operating Sessions.		1 week before convention			
Have sign-up sheet at on-site registration desk for any last-minute vacancies/cancelations.		During convention			
Obtain non-claimed deposits from layout owners.		1 week after convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Silent Auction

An optional part of a Lone Star Region (LSR) Annual Convention is to have a Silent Auction. Any auction held at a regional convention must comply with Article V, Section 11 of the LSR By-Laws. Per this section, 5% of auction proceeds will be retained by the Host Group, 5% will be distributed to the LSR, and the remaining 90% will be distributed to the entities/sellers that supplied the silent auction items.

If the host Group decides to include a Silent Auction during the regional convention, the LSR Google Drive has the Silent Auction Master Spreadsheet that will track all auction items, seller and buyer activity. Use of this file will reduce hours of work into a very short period.

All sellers will be required to have a completed Silent Auction Bid Sheet for each item/lot that will be a part of the Silent Auction. Make sure that all information is clearly readable. As the Silent Auction items are put on display, the Silent Auction Bid Sheet will need to be placed directly adjacent to the item(s).

As several forms will need to be printed before, during and after the Silent Auction, the Host Group will need to have a computer and printer in the Auction Room.

Important: At the end of the Silent Auction, the Bid Sheet will be separated from the auction items. Have a Lot # tag/identifier with each Lot, that will remain with the Lots until they are gathered for pickup by the buyers. The Lot # tag can be stapled to each bag, making it easier to retrieve the Lot(s) when the buyer arrives to complete their purchase.

To use the Silent Auction Master Spreadsheet file;

- Read the “How To Use” tab to become familiar with how the spreadsheet works.
- After first opening, first save the file under a unique name, such as “(year) Silent Auction Master Spreadsheet”. In the event of an error, this will keep the original spreadsheet available.
- On the <Attendees> tab, using the “Badge Number” from the Registration spreadsheet, enter the attendees’ names to the right of their corresponding badge number.
- As item are brought in for the auction, using the Silent Auction Bid Sheet, use the <Lots> tab to enter the sellers badge number (column B), a description of the item(s) (column D), estimated value of the item (column E) and the amount of the bid reserve (column F). All of this information can be obtained from the Silent Auction Bid Sheet.

Once the auction is over, using the Silent Auction Bid Sheets, on the <Lots> tab, enter the winning bid amount (column H) and the badge number of the winning bidder (column I). This information will automatically update the appropriate information on all of the other spreadsheet tabs.

The <Buyer Settlement> tab will group the winning bids together by bidder. A pick list can be printed for each bidder by placing a page break before each new bidder’s name to use to package each bidders’ items together. Hide any used rows before printing. Purchased items should be ready before the time for purchasers to claim their item(s) begins.

Establish a time frame for the purchasers to claim their item(s) purchased. These times should be strictly adhered to.

Make sure that the amounts for the Credit Card Transaction Fee (Cell V9) and the Credit Card Processing Percentage (Cell V11) are completed.

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CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – AUCTION

The total amount due from each purchaser will be displayed in two different amounts on the “Total Due” and “Due w/CC” columns. Payments by cash or check will pay the amount in the “Total Due” column.

Payments made by a credit or debit card will pay the amount in the “Due w/CC” column, which includes the credit card processing fee.

- If the purchaser is paying with cash or check, use the “Total Due” amount in column Q for the amount to be paid.
- If the purchaser is paying with a credit card, use the “Due w/CC” amount in column R for the amount to be paid by the purchaser. This amount includes credit card processing fees.

Once the type of payment has been identified and the payment amount has been collected;

- enter the amount paid in the “Total Paid”, column S.
- In the “How Paid” column U, note how the item(s) were paid for, i.e., Cash, Check or Credit Card.

Have a time frame for sellers to be paid after the ending time for purchasers to pay is finished. A Best Practice is to prepare the sellers checks before the time for sellers to be paid. To pay the sellers;

- Use the <Seller Settlement> tab and complete the following information on each check;
 - o Seller Name and Amount due to seller
 - o On the Memo Line, enter the Lot Numbers that the seller is being paid for.
- In column S, on the final line for each vendor, enter the amount that each vendor is being paid
- In column T, on the final line for each vendor, enter the check number being used to pay each vendor

During the same time that checks are being written for the sellers, any unsold items from each seller should be gathered and prepared for each seller to remove from the Silent Auction room. A Pick-List for unsold items can be created, by seller, using the <Unsold> tab.

Note: To maintain the integrity of the Silent Auction Master Spreadsheet file, the spreadsheet has been protected. If necessary, a password is not needed to unprotect the spreadsheet.

Silent Auction

- All buyers and sellers shall be identified by their convention registration number.
- A "lot" shall be defined as one or more items selling from a single auction form. Sellers shall fill out a Silent Auction Bid Sheet form for each lot. Required information includes the seller's convention registration number, a description of the item(s), and any reserve bid amount. The unique Lot Number will be written by silent auction staff.
- Auction items may be entered starting on Thursday at _____ through _____? Operational hours will be posted at the auction entrance; the room may close from time to time for staff scheduling reasons.
- Sellers may bid on their own items.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES – AUCTION

- All opening bids shall be equal to the reserve bid. In the absence of a reserve bid, the minimum opening bid listed below (based on the value of the item) shall be used:

Item Value	Minimum Bid
Less than \$10	\$0.50
\$10 to \$50	\$1.00
Over \$50	\$2.00

All bids over \$10 shall be in even dollars only.

- Some time on Friday afternoon (at a pre-determined time), a whistle shall sound, signaling the end of the auction. When the whistle sounds, everyone shall raise their hands and exit the room. The auction staff shall close the doors and begin reconciliation of all items. Should an auction staff member observe any bidding activity after the close of the auction, the bid card for that item will be picked up and the last bid deleted; the bid shall revert to the previous bid. It is the intent that the seller shall not be penalized for inappropriate actions by bidders.
- No bid shall be withdrawn after the close of bidding. When an item is sold, the seller shall pay a fee equal to the total of ten percent (10%) of the selling price to the LSR and Host Group. This fee shall apply to all items sold, inclusive of the items purchased back by the seller.
- The auction staff will settle with all buyers first, possibly from 8:30 am until 10:30 am on Saturday. Transactions will be in the form of cash, check or credit cards, but credit card transactions will include a transaction fee of imposed by the credit card processor.
- The auction staff will then settle with all sellers, possibly from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm on Saturday. Seller transactions shall be in the form of a check issued on the convention account.
- All unsold or unreconciled items shall be returned to the seller. In the event that the successful bidder cannot be located by noon Saturday, the item will be deemed unsold.
- Any unclaimed items shall go to the Host Group convention committee for disposal as it sees fit.
- All conflicts, discrepancies or other matters requiring interpretation shall be resolved by the auction chairperson and convention chairman, whose decision shall be final.
- The Silent Auction Bid Sheet forms will be provided at the convention by the Host Group.

AUCTIONS

Silent Auction

- The silent auction room should be approximately 800 to 1,000 square feet to accommodate 20 display tables for entries. Determine if there are additional charges for this high number of tables. Because of the necessity of security, access to the room should be limited to one lockable door.
- Tables should be the typical 30" in width by 72" or 96" in length. Determine if daily additional charges are made for table top covers and shirting since this can be \$5 to \$15 per table for 3 days amounting to a total of almost \$1,000. This is usually a negotiable item for the venue. A diagram should be provided to the venue showing the desired room and table set-up.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES - AUCTIONS

- Four chairs and a table will be needed near the door for Silent Auction personnel.
- The Host Group has the responsibility to provide personnel starting at the beginning of the convention on Thursday, all day Friday, and at such other times as directed by the Silent Auction Chairperson and Convention Chairman to log in entries, assure placement at appropriate locations, and provide security.
- **VERY IMPORTANT** The Silent Auction Room must never be left unattended and must be securely locked when closed.
- Issue entry Lot numbers which become the most important control for sorting sold and not-sold items. This should be done using the convention registration number for each individual.
- Place items on tables in entry number order rather than by type. This may require constant shifting of items by auction workers to provide sufficient space.
- A well-tested computer application is essential for auctions, and the Silent Auction Master Spreadsheet is available on the LSR's Google Drive.
- The auction computer application must use a commonly available program; have bullet-proof procedures, and provide sufficient options to handle almost any situation. Auction personnel on duty must be computer literate and able to handle basic Microsoft Excel computer functions. The application developer must be available for handling necessary situations.
- The silent auction computer program has been used very successfully at numerous LSR auctions in recent years. This Silent Auction program will produce extracts listing highest bidder for sold items and listing all items bought by convention attendees by their badge number.
- Many people are needed to collate items bought and sack them by highest bidder, as determined by computer lists.
- A computer list for items that receive no bids (not sold) will be used to collect these items in sacks for return to owners. A second team of volunteer workers can handle these items.
- The silent auction treasurer will be responsible for receiving and dispersing payments on the spot.
- Time schedule for pick-ups shall be prominently displayed and announcements made at the banquet in the event items still have not been picked up.

Live Auction

- Entertaining auctioneer can result in fast paced auction and generate higher bids for items.
- Computer application will produce extracts listing highest bidder for sold items and listing all items bought by a convention attendee by badge number.
- Many people are needed to collate items bought and sack them by highest bidder, as determined by computer lists.
- The treasurer will be responsible for receiving and dispersing payments on the spot.
- Provide fan-type of cards for bidders to hold up to show their convention registration number.
- Personnel needed to keep track of winning bidder, the sold price, and the payments received.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Silent Auction Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Verify meeting room arrangements with Hotel Coordinator.		Two years before convention			
Recruit volunteers.		6 months before convention			
Make sure all auction staff is familiar with Microsoft Excel program for Silent Auctions.		1 month before convention			
Make sure all volunteers are familiar with check-in process.		1 month before convention			
Determine who will be Silent Auction Treasurer to receive and disburse payment if other than the Convention Treasurer.		1 year before convention			
Verify with Convention Treasurer if credit cards will be accepted for payment.		1 year before convention			
Coordinate with Convention Treasurer for disbursement of funds after the closing of the auction.		At convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

SECURITY

A convention Security Coordinator can be utilized to make sure that function rooms are secured at the end of each day's activities. This is especially important for the Contest Room, Auction Room, and rooms where expensive Host Group/LSR equipment is located.

- Secure a Security Chief to coordinate security with hotel security personnel.
- Security personnel shall check for Convention name badges at clinics, contests, auctions, company store, and banquets.
- Constant security is required for Contest Room. This room must be locked when not available to convention attendees, at night and during the banquet.
- Constant security is required for Silent Auction Room. This room must be locked at night and during the banquet.
- If digital projectors, screens and computers are in clinic rooms, these rooms must also be secured when clinics are not being held.
- Do not depend upon the hotel to provide security.
- Locked rooms must be check periodically to assure that all items are secure.
- Security personnel assure that maximum room capacities are not exceeded.

Convention Security Coordinator Responsibilities Report					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Work with Hotel Coordinator to ensure that the Contest Room door is lockable and Contest Room staff has a key.		1 month before convention			
Check clinic rooms at the end of each day to verify that all doors are locked.		Daily during convention			
Monitor individuals to make sure that everyone has a name badge.		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Nearly every aspect of a convention will benefit from the assistance of volunteers. Volunteers can be utilized both in advance of, and during the convention. Some examples of how volunteers can contribute to the success of a convention are;

- Publicity -
 - o distributing promotional materials to local hobby stores
 - o making presentations to model railroad clubs to promote the convention
 - o creating articles for publication in *The Marker Lamp* and other publications
- Registration -
 - o Assist in the preparation of name bags and welcome packets
 - o Work the on-site registration desk
- Clinics -
 - o Introduce clinicians at the beginning of each clinic
 - o Verify that audio/visual equipment is working properly before the beginning of each clinic
- Audio/Visual -
 - o Move-In and Move-Out of audio/visual equipment
 - o Equipment set-up, including taping down cords to prevent trip-hazards
 - o Verify that each clinician is familiar on how to use the audio/visual equipment
- Contest Room
 - o Bag check
 - o Contest entries check-in
 - o Security
 - o Judging
- Bus Tours -
 - o Work as a bus captain / tour guide
 - o Prepare ice chests with bottled water and ice prior for each excursion
- Silent Auction -
 - o Item check-in
 - o Security
 - o Gathering/packaging purchased items per bidder after auction closes
 - o Gathering/packaging unsold items per seller

1. Identify from each convention department how many and when volunteers will be needed.
2. Obtain information for each volunteer position of the volunteer's responsibilities.
3. Create a chart to list dates, times and number of volunteers needed. Update with names as volunteers are recruited.
4. Volunteer assignments during the convention should be limited to 2-to-4-hour time frames, allowing volunteers to be able to participate in convention activities.
5. Determine times when volunteers are NOT available to avoid scheduling conflicts.
6. Coordinate training for any volunteer positions that will require any special knowledge on using computer applications.
7. Create Check-In process to verify that volunteers have arrived as scheduled and to track NMRA Achievement Program volunteer time units.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Volunteer Coordinator Responsibilities Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
From each convention department, determine how many volunteers will be needed and when volunteers will be needed.		6 months before convention			
From each convention department, obtain a list of responsibilities that volunteers are to fulfill.		6 months before convention			
Attend division meeting to solicit volunteers.		4 months before convention			
Attend division meeting to solicit volunteers.		3 months before convention			
Review computer applications that volunteers will need to be familiar with.		3 months before convention			
Coordinate training of computer applications with convention department and volunteer.		2 months before convention			
Distribute list of volunteers with dates, times and assignments to volunteers		1 month before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

VIDEO and MOVIE ROOM

An option to have at an LSR Convention is to have a Video/Movie Room, where convention attendees can gather and view railroad related videos. An alternative is to access a live stream feed at websites such as RailStream.net, WorldCams.tv, LiveTrains.com, SothwestRailcams.com, via YouTube, and others. Some sites also have access to radio chatter. The downside to live stream feeds is that even though the cameras are on, there may not be any railroad activity taking place.

If doing a video room;

1. Need small room (interior or with curtains) for videos or movies.
2. Use home-type TV's and DVD players to avoid costs of renting commercial equipment.
3. Solicit club members and area model railroaders for videos that could be loaned for these showings.
4. Arrange for monitoring every 30 minutes to assure continuous showing of videos.
5. Equipment and videos must be secured to avoid theft.

Convention Video and Movie Room Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine is space is available for video / movie room.		One year before convention			
Determine if movies or live-stream video will be used.		6 months before convention			
Obtain necessary equipment.		1 month before convention			
If movies, obtain movies		2 weeks before convention			
Constantly check room to make sure movies are playing		During convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

CONCIERGE

An optional assignment for a Lone Star Regional Convention Committee member is having a Concierge. If the host group decides to have a Concierge as a part of their convention committee, following are some responsibilities that the Concierge should be prepared for.

1. Be fully aware of the complete convention activities and schedule. Be prepared to answer questions. Are there any openings still available for operating sessions? When is the latest I can enter my model in the contest room? When and where will door prizes be announced?
2. Be included in the conversation for any last-minute changes after the Timetable has been printed. Post changes at the on-site registration desk and when applicable, outside of the clinic rooms. If the venue has a reader board that lists convention activities, communicate the changes with the venue.
3. Be prepared to address questions and concerns from convention attendees. If an attendee is requesting a change in room seating arrangements, lighting, air-conditioning/heating, etc., these should be forwarded to the Convention Chairman or their designate to respond to, if they agree that the request is warranted to take action.
4. Be familiar with the what, when and where of the venue. Some possibilities are; Is food available? When is it available? Where is it available? Swimming pool? Business Center?
5. Be familiar with the local area. Are there local restaurants and how do I get there? Are there alternate routes that can be taken to avoid predictable traffic congestion? Where is the nearest emergency medical center and how do I get there? Where is the closest pharmacy? Possible questions are limitless, and having knowledge of the local area is invaluable.
6. Assist in ride-share coordination. Layout visits, Operating Sessions, and Non-Rail activities might require multiple people going to the same location, but not everyone having transportation. Have a sign-up sheet with individuals that have offered their vehicle, with the maximum capacity of passengers. Include contact information for everyone.
7. Maintain a Message Board for convention attendees. This can be done using one of the LSR whiteboards.

It is impossible to pre-determine the questions or need for assistance that a convention attendee might have. A Concierge should be prepared for nearly anything and everything, as best as is possible.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Concierge Responsibilities – Check-Off Report

Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Prepare a list of restaurants in the immediate vicinity		3 months before convention			
Become familiar with venue services, amenities, locations and times.		1 month before convention			
Be familiar with ALL convention activities.		1 month before convention			
Be aware of any convention activity changes after Timetable has been printed.		2 weeks before convention			
Assist with ride-share sign-up sheets for layout visits and operating sessions.		During convention			

CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

HOSPITALITY ROOM

An option to hosting a LSR Convention is to host a Hospitality Room. Before doing so, it is important to review the venues contract to determine what is and what is not permitted i.e. some venues do not allow for outside food or beverage items to be brought into the venues meeting rooms.

A Hospitality Room can take place in a meeting room, or a hotel guest room. If taking place in a meeting room and there is a restriction on outside Food & Beverage, it is important to note that, as an example, an in-house gallon of coffee can cost \$30.00 plus tax plus gratuity, totaling over \$40.00 per gallon. If deciding to use an in-house service, make sure to discuss with the Convention Chairman and Convention Treasurer before making any purchases with the venue.

If the Host Group has determined that they would like to have a Hospitality Room, to control expenses, regardless of the source of Food & Beverage items, consider who is invited to the Hospitality Room. Is it available to all convention attendees? Is it strictly open to convention clinicians as an expression of appreciation to their contribution to the convention? Is it strictly open to the Guest Speaker and/or invited guests? Is it only open to Convention Committee members? While you want this to be a positive experience to attendees in the Hospitality Room, you should also consider the financial aspect as it will affect the convention and its budget.

If the Host Group decides to have a Hospitality Room without using a hired vendor, they should be prepared to supply all cups, plates, cutlery, ice, etc. in addition to the food and beverages that will be served in the Hospitality Room.

Convention Hospitality Room Coordinator Responsibilities					
Assignment	Who	Due By	Started	Completed	Comments
Determine if outside food & beverage is permitted in the Hospitality Room.		1 year before convention			
Determine amount budgeted for Hospitality Room.		3 months before convention			
Determine who is invited to Hospitality Room,		1 month before convention			
Obtain, cups, plates, cutlery for Hospitality Room.		1 week before convention			
Obtain food and beverage for Hospitality Room.		1 day before convention			

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide
CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

1. Develop computer applications for the following:
 - Schedules
 - Registration
 - Auctions
 - Contests
 - Tours
2. These computer applications must use a commonly available program; have bullet-proof procedures, and provide sufficient options to handle almost any situation. Convention personnel on duty must be computer literate and be able to handle basic computer functions. A person familiar with the applications should be available for handling possible situations.
3. Database sorts and extracts customized for applications listed in paragraph 1 above are to be prepared and tested weeks before the convention.
4. Keep the Regional Convention Chairman informed about these computer applications.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

LSR Meetings

When hosting a LSR convention, a part of the Host Groups responsibility is to make arrangements for the three annual LSR meetings. These meetings are the Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting, the Annual Board of Directors Meeting, and the Annual Membership Meeting.

Mid-Year LSR Board of Directors Meeting

The LSR Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting takes place on a Saturday, one (1) or two (2) weeks before Superbowl Sunday. In addition to conducting the business meeting for the region, this also gives the Board of Directors and members of the Convention Committee an opportunity to do a guided walk-through of the facility, to not only become familiar with the facility, but also to aid in making the preparations for the annual convention. In particular, the conventions clinics, non-rails activities, and contest room coordinators will need to view the rooms where their convention events will take place. The LSR has representatives for the contest room and non-rails activities, but their counterparts on the Host Groups convention committee should also attend.

A meeting room that will accommodate the twenty-six (26) members of the Board of Directors, and possibly additional LSR members that decide to attend the meeting is required. **When negotiating the contract for the annual convention, make sure to include a room for the LSR Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting.** The seating arrangements for the Board of Directors can be one large conference table, a u-shape, or a hollow square. Additional seating for possible guests can either be a part of the overall setup, or chairs can be placed around the room's perimeter.

As all members of the Board of Directors might not be able to attend the meeting in person, it is necessary to have a Wi-Fi signal, allowing non-present members to join the meeting via a Zoom call. The LSR President will make the arrangements for the Zoom call, and provide their own laptop computer. When possible, having external computer speakers will assist everyone in the room to hear the meeting participants attending by Zoom. More importantly, a large television monitor in the room will allow Zoom attendees to be both seen and heard.

The Host Group Convention Chairman has the responsibility of making the arrangements for the LSR Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting. When doing so, remember that the LSR convention will be generating thousands of dollars for the venue, so hopefully the meeting room for the mid-year meeting will be provided free of charge. When making the arrangements for the guided walk-through, appreciate that some function space might be in use and may not be able to be viewed.

In the event that a meeting room is not available at the convention's venue, an option for the mid-years meeting is to have it take place at the conventions host hotel. Again, convention attendees will be generating thousands of dollars in revenue for the hotel, so hopefully the meeting room will be provided free of charge.

Annual LSR Board of Directors Meeting

Customarily the Annual LSR Board of Directors Meeting takes place in the early afternoon on Thursday, before the beginning of the convention's activities. All of the same arrangements made for the mid-year meeting will be required for the annual meeting, with the exception of a guided walk-through of the venue.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

LSR Meetings

When necessary, the function space being used for the Non-Rail activities can be used for the Annual LSR Board of Directors Meeting. If this is done, it is important to communicate and arrange with the Non-Rail Coordinator to avoid a conflict for use of the meeting space. When doing this, keep in mind that some board meetings can take up to three hours to finish.

Annual LSR Membership Meeting

In order to maintain the LSR's 501c3 status, the LSR is required to have an annual meeting with our members. The meeting can take place either during the main convention activities, or at the Saturday evening Awards Banquet.

The Host Groups Convention Chairman will need to coordinate with the LSR President when and where the Annual Membership meeting will take place. If the meeting will be held during other convention activities, a clinic room can be used with the existing seating arrangement. If this is done, it is imperative to communicate and arrange with the Clinics Coordinator to have a room available for the Annual Membership meeting. The Timetable Coordinator will also need to be made aware of the meeting so that it can be included in the convention's Timetable.

If it is decided to have the Annual Membership Meeting during the Awards Banquet, approximately twenty to thirty minutes should be added to the agenda. Speak with the LSR President to see if their discussion will include any pictures, and if so, make arrangements with the Banquet Audio/Visual Coordinator for their presentation. The Printing Coordinator will also need to be informed so that the appropriate information can be added to the banquet agenda.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Hotel and Venue Requirements And Comparisons

We continually encourage new locales in Louisiana and Texas to host conventions, so we can enjoy their layouts, rail-related facilities, industries, and local attractions.

Get an Early Start ... Really Early!

It is very important to secure a convention venue or hotel at least 2 years before the convention date. Why is so much lead time necessary? The answer is many companies, trade and educational groups, and sporting tournament are increasingly securing venues and hotel rooms as far out as 5 years in advance. Unlike many of these groups, our LSR conventions use a lot of meeting and display space in the hotel. Since many of the local host convention personnel do not stay at the hotel, the hotel will not get much revenue from us for guestroom rentals.

However, if we get to the prospective hotel before other groups, then we may be able to secure most of the clinic, exhibit, and substantial banquet space they have available. Hotels frequently hold out on early signing of small groups because they are hoping a bigger, deeper-pockets group may come along later. On the other hand, the old saying “the early bird gets the worm” frequently works for us, and we get a good deal if we are persistent early in the game.

The prospective LSR Host Group has to present to the LSR Convention Committee a valid contractual agreement with the important details discussed in this Convention Planning Guide and in the LSR By-Laws. Just a preliminary proposal, with many details missing is not substantial enough for the Committee to make a good decision. It might take several months to get the suitable contract proposal from the hotel. The LSR Convention Committee will need time to coordinate a review of the proposed contract, and the LSR President might choose to include the entire LSR Board of Directors in the decision process. The proposed venue should be made aware of this and realize that an immediate or short-term decision is not always possible. Once the hotel/venue proposal is approved by the LSR Convention Committee, then the Host Group can finalize the contract. Again, this also can take additional months.

However, while the venue contract negotiations and Convention Committee approval is dragging on, the Host Group should be getting organized and assigning the convention responsibilities that are discussed in detail elsewhere in the Convention Planning Guide. This takes a lot of time, and it goes by quickly. The most frequent comments are: “We should have started 3 years out instead of 2. We just could not comprehend all of the crucial details that must be addressed”.

The Search for a Suitable Convention Venue

A very critical element for a successful convention is a good meeting facility that has large function rooms for the Rail and Non-Rail contests, auctions, sales and displays; several break-out room for clinics, and banquet facilities. We want all of this space at a low affordable price. Most of our conventions have been held at large urban hotels which satisfy the space requirements plus offer good hotel and banquet facilities. However, we have had some conventions where the hotel is distant from the exhibit and clinic venue. We welcome new and innovative suggestions for conventions.

Many of the full-facility hotels are located close to the business center of major cities. During most weekdays they serve very large, well-financed conventions of many thousands of people on expense accounts. On weekends they become the social centers for big weddings, galas, etc. These hotels might be too expensive and not very suitable for our LSR conventions.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Hotel and Venue Requirements And Comparisons

Fortunately, there are excellent hotels outside of a city's core that we can actively consider. They are busy from Monday to Thursday morning with business conventions. However, on the weekends their business might decrease. Thus, they are anxious for our Thursday to Sunday conventions and may offer much more for substantially less money.

Numerous mid-sized hotel facilities have been built recently in suburban business areas. They have nice guestrooms or suites at reasonable prices. Unfortunately, they usually have only one good-sized meeting room, which can be subdivided, and occasionally, a few smaller meeting rooms. Banquet space for 150-200 people may not be available, and meals might need to be catered in by an outside food service company.

Within this Convention Planning Guide extensive information and data sheets are provided about venue space and many other convention requirements. The planning "Income and Expense What-If Estimations" spreadsheet is available on the LSR Google Drive to convention planners to identify income and expenses and determine the breakeven point of a convention.

One significant change that is occurring is the gradual decline in the attendance at LSR conventions. For example, at the 25th anniversary convention in Dallas in 1976 over 625 people attended. For the 50th Golden anniversary convention in 2001, 291 people attended. In the last few years, we have averaged about 150-175 attendees. When properly planned, at least 100-125 registrants are usually needed for a convention to break-even financially. Since this is about the size of some wedding receptions or family reunions, we simply do not always have the clout to get a really good deal from a hotel.

The internet websites will provide lots of information and photographs about the possible convention venues and hotels. Most cities have Convention & Visitors Bureau's (CVB) which can be a good source of basic information about hotels and activities in their area and provide information packets, etc. Some CVB's send out a generic request for proposal (RFP) or bids to all hotels within their area. Some small hotels may barrage you with proposals. Most will not have the large amount of display and clinic spaces we need. Some larger hotels may not bother to respond, or will offer proposals that are too expensive. However, this does provide some contact information, and this could open the door for some personal negotiations for a favorable deal. Some cities even offer rebates, such as \$5.00 per night for those staying at hotels within their cities. It never hurts to ask.

Even though it can be time consuming, one way to look at the entire metropolitan utilizing the various internet map services searching for hotels or meeting venues. With a few clicks, a lot of information can be gathered and a brief analysis can determine if a facility shows potential. Also determine the areas where many of the model railroaders live, especially those who have layouts available for tours. Then utilize a street-view or even better, drive around the perspective area to evaluate not only the venue, but the neighborhood in general. In many cities changes are happening very quickly, some for the better, but some areas have gone down very quickly.

After a group of possible venues has been selected, an unescorted personal walk-through of the possible facilities and a drive around the neighborhood may reveal that some possible locations are not very suitable for LSR conventions. For those that appear to be suitable possibilities, a personal meeting with the facility representatives is very important. It is a good idea to have at least two Host Group representatives to go to these meetings together and then compare notes afterwards.

The "Venue Walk-Thru Check Off List", a check-off list to be taken to the first meeting is provided in this Convention Planning Guide and on the LSR Google Drive. It covers most of the detailed items you want to discuss, with the hotel staff during this meeting. By having this detailed information at the beginning, the

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hotel can provide a more complete response and pricing without having additional meetings. Usually, you are dealing with a sales staff person for the initial negotiations. During the convention the events staff or catering staff takes over for the meeting room activities and the banquet. It is extremely important to develop a good working relationship with the staff because many “situations” can occur. Remember Murphy’s Law: If it can happen, it will happen!

The Host Group Convention Chairman will be heavily involved in many of the details with the hotel throughout the convention. It behooves them to become very familiar with the unique terms used by hotel, such as “banquet event order (BEO)”, cut-off date (deadline), guarantee (financial obligation), etc. It is very important to develop an awareness that simple requests at these venues, such as coffee service during a staff meeting, can result in hundreds of dollars in expense.

Very Important Contractual Items

Two extremely important items in a hotel contract are (1) the food and beverage costs including sales taxes and service fee (gratuity) and the minimum number of meals guaranteed, and (2) the guest room guarantee and the penalties if the room nights guarantee is not met.

Food and Beverage Minimums

The cost for a banquet or reception and breakfast are usually the greatest expense to a convention. The hotel would be “delighted” for you to choose a \$100.00 fancy banquet dinner with all the trimmings. Then the state and local Sales Tax and service charge (gratuity) of 20% to 35% are added to the \$100.00 basic meal cost. The total for the \$100.00 dinner could actually be \$135.31 with a 25% service fee. Most LSR convention attendees are not willing to pay for these high-priced meals with their hobby funds.

Through negotiations with the hotel, usually the total meal cost for the banquet dinner can be reduced to under \$50.00 or less.

The total meal expense frequently is the principal deciding factor in the selection of the convention hotel and the cost of convention registrations. Be very aware that the hotel contract may have provisions hidden somewhere else in the contract that state the service charges will be added to ALL hotel services including meals, meeting room set-ups, etc. Always ask for the hotels Meeting Guidelines and price list to identify these hidden costs. When possible, get these ambiguous clauses deleted or negotiated or else you may have some very unpleasant surprises when the final bill is presented to you after the convention.

Most hotels are not very willing to commit to a fixed meal cost two years before the convention date. Instead, they want a guarantee of a fixed overall payment for all food and beverage services to which they will add the aforementioned sales tax and service charge/gratuity. In addition, a hotel may also require a guarantee for a minimum number of meals to be served. The two guarantees must be paid, according to the legal contract, regardless of how many guests are actually served or how much money is actually spent. Again, these are sometimes negotiable items.

Let’s look at examples of the impact of the meal and beverage expenses. Assume your convention registration fee will be \$90.00 and attendance will be 150 people for a total income of \$13,500.00.

Assume the food and beverage guarantee will be \$9,000.00, including sales tax and service fee charges, and the guaranteed number of meals to be served is 150 for the banquet. If all of this works out you will be in reasonably good shape with \$4,500.00 left over for all the other expenses and produce a profit for the Host

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Group. However, if a downturn in the economy occurs, and the registration drops to 100 people for a total income of only \$9,000.00, you are still obligated to pay the \$9,000.00 minimum guarantee for a total of 150 meals. Thus, there will not be a profit from the convention and no funds to cover all other convention expenses. Also, you may incur a substantial penalty for not meeting the guaranteed number of guestrooms. This will leave very little profit, if any, or even a loss to the Host Group and to the LSR.

You can see how the food and beverage guarantee and number of meals served guarantee can be totally disastrous to the financial outcome of a convention. Charging a higher registration fee to cover the excessive meal costs might cause some members to not attend the convention because it is just too expensive. Before you sign a contract with provisions, it is critical to determine the impact that contractual guarantees will have on your convention. This is where the “What if, what else” type of analysis is critical. These are discussed in detail in the Convention Planning Guide.

A great number of negotiations should be done with the hotel on banquet and other meals/food service costs, and all other costs to get to a bare minimum amount. The various convention volunteer workers need to be very aware of the importance of controlling costs in their respective areas. The convention treasurer must provide frequent updates to the Host Convention Chairman about the financial situations and status.

It is not absolutely essential for a convention to make a profit. However, since the annual conventions account for at least two-thirds of the income for the LSR, profitable annual conventions are extremely significant to the LSR remaining solvent.

For a good example, refer to the 2007, 2014, and 2019 Conventions. 2007 and 2014 saved a lot of money by contracting with a Round Rock hotel which had a large convention building but had to use an outside caterer since it did not have full cooking facilities. Two very good meals in 2014 cost \$31.67, inclusive of everything. In 2019 a Dessert Buffet was provided instead of a meal. As a result, these conventions put a nice sum of money into their bank account.

Room Night Guarantee

The second very important contractual obligation is the “room night guarantee”. As part of the contract entered into with a hotel, hotels often usually require that a minimum number of guestrooms will be rented over the period of the convention. This room night guarantee is a legal obligation that must be met or else a penalty will be charged by the hotel to the convention. Often this penalty is so high that the convention can just pay for the needed remaining rooms for less money than paying the penalty. The room night guarantee is a major negotiation point with the hotel.

Not meeting the minimum room night guarantee has resulted in financial bust for some LSR conventions!

Other Hotel Agreements and Contractual Restrictions

In addition to the general hotel contract, the hotels have extensive action documents, such as Banquet Event Orders (BEO's), listing every detail for each day/event for all services in the hotel. Examples of items specified in writing in BEO's are: the number and arrangement (theatre, classroom, etc.) of tables and chairs in each meeting room, drinking water availability (Ice Water Station, which should be free), banquet

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table arrangements, food items for each meal, exactly when meals would be served, etc. These details must be reviewed with the hotel event manager or other appropriate parties to assure that they will be handled as you intend for them to be. Indecision can be chaotic, and changes can be very expensive. Therefore, your convention committee personnel should brainstorm and think of every detail, the “what else”, ahead of time for the various convention activities.

For every service or equipment that you request from the hotel, make sure to determine if it is free or what the cost is. If an item, such as a flipchart, is needed for 2 or 3 days, it could be less expensive to purchase it from an outside source (office supply store) rather than rent it from the hotel or the hotel's preferred supplier. A purchased piece of equipment can also then be passed on to other LSR activities, both during and after the convention.

Frequently, these contracts may have other provisions which are legal, but potentially may be unfavorable to the LSR convention either financially or by preventing some activities to happen. One hotel contract stated “No food and/or beverage of any kind will be permitted to be brought into the hotel, or any suite used as a hospitality suite, by the group or any of the group's guests”. So, forget about “legally” carrying in that McDonald's hamburger for a late-night snack in your hotel room.

While some of these contractual restrictions may not be realistically enforceable, they are still in the legally binding contract. The convention will be held responsible for these infractions. Fortunately, many of these provisions can be negotiated out of the contract via a “special considerations addendum”. The addendum must be incorporated into the contract and signed by an authorized representative of the hotel or venue.

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Function Space

The amount of available function space for clinics, non-rail activities, contest room, banquet, etc. will vary at every location. Having too much space provides for flexibility on how to use the space, while not having enough space can have a negative impact on the convention and the convention's attendees. Before soliciting a location for the LSR convention, it is important to determine what activities will take place during the convention to ensure that there is adequate space for all activities.

Some standard activities at a LSR convention are rail clinics, non-rail activities/clinics, contest room, and awards banquet. The local host group might decide to include additional activities, such as a silent auction, on-site layouts/operating sessions, raffle and/or video room. The following Meeting and Banquet Space Requirements provides information for each convention activity.

Venue seating chart capacities tend to list absolute maximums, not accounting for audio/visual equipment, a presenters table, and preferred wider spaces between seating. Before deciding if a function room is large enough, make a realistic determination of what the actual seating capacity is once every component of the convention activity is included in each room.

On some occasions it might become necessary to compromise the desired convention activities based on the amount of available function space. Serious consideration should be made before accepting any compromises.

Rail Clinic Rooms

It is preferred to have three (3) rooms designation for rail clinics. This provides convention attendees the opportunity to select from different topics, based on their individual interests. It is preferred to have each rail clinic room in close proximity to each other allowing attendees to easily flow from one room to the next, and for the host group to easily monitor and maintain the activities in each room.

Clinic rooms might be somewhat square, or long and narrow.

Rail clinic rooms are typically set in Theatre style, with only having chairs for the audience. Chairs are approximately 18" x 18" in size. Some venues might attempt to have 18" between the front and back of each row. An absolute minimum of 24" should be between rows, although a minimum of 30" is preferred.

Rail clinics typically include an audio/visual presentation, and the appropriate space is required for the equipment. Take into consideration the proctor table and projection screen. The LSR has both of these items in the LSR A/V Inventory. The projection tables are approximately 18" x 24". The projection screens are 6' wide. For an image to be properly displayed on a 6' screen, 9' to 12' of space is required between the projector and screen to properly display the presentation.

Remember to include a table and chair(s) for the clinician in the front of the room.

If the room shape is a square, the entrance/exit should be at the back of the room. If the room is long and narrow, having the seating facing a long wall will allow the audience a better view of the screen and clinician.

Hands-On / Make-N-Take Clinics

A clinic that will require the attendees to create a project, or use a laptop computer, will need Classroom style seating, with both table and chairs. Depending on the venues inventory, tables could be available in 18" or 30" widths, and 6' or 8' in length.

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Function Space

The narrower 18” tables , sometimes referred to as “skinny” tables, are usually adequate for Hands-On / Make-N-Take clinics, and allow for more attendees in the room than the wider 30” tables. It is important that each clinic participant has sufficient space to work and for their supplies. A 6’ table should have seating for two (2) people, and an 8’ table can have seating for three (3) people.

There should be 3’ between each row of tables to provide participants enough room for seating and access.

Non-Rail Room

The Non-Rail room can be set in a variety of ways, included Conference style at one large table, a Hollow Square, an Open-U shape, Classroom or possibly round tables. The activities in the Non-Rail room will determine the best tables/chair configuration.

In general, the Non-Rail room is preferred to be set so that all attendees are facing each other. The only exception is when the room is set Classroom style. As there is often creative projects taking place in the Non-Rail room, two chairs should be set at 6’ tables or three chairs at 8’ tables, the same as Rail Make-N-Take clinics. Extra table space is often required for supplies.

Unlike the Rails clinic rooms, participants in the Non-Rail room are very mobile. All walkways should be wide enough for easy access throughout the room.

When using round table, no more than eight chairs should be set at 60” tables, or ten chairs at 72” tables. Fewer chairs at each table will provide for more room for supplies and working.

Contest Room

It is difficult to predetermine the amount of table space that will be needed to display contest room entries at a LSR convention. It is always a good idea to have extra space in the event that additional tables need to be added. The entrance to the room will require a workstation for the processing of contest room entries. A table for a “bag check” is recommended. Three walls will need display tables around the perimeter. Additional tables can be set in the center of the room. It is important that aisles are wide enough to prevent individuals from bumping into the display tables.

Coordinate with the LSR Contest Room Chairperson for the specifics on how the Contest Room for each convention will be set.

Silent Auction

Each year’s convention has the option to include a Silent Auction as a part of the convention activities. If a Silent Auction is to take place, the room setup is similar to the Contest Room, with a work station and tables around the perimeter and in the center of the room. Narrower 6’ x 18” tables can possibly be used.

The convention might also decide to have a “white elephant” sale in the Silent Auction room, with items available for purchase without undergoing the bidding process.

If the convention decides to have a Silent Auction but the venue does not have enough space, the room for the Silent Auction and the Contest Room can be all set in one room. This is not preferred, but it is an option. If done, both the Contest and Silent Auction will require their own work stations. Efforts will need to be made not to comingle items for the Contest with the Silent Auction items.

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Function Space

Awards Banquet

Attendance at the Awards Banquet can vary between 150 to 175 attendees. Some conventions have had over 200 attendees. Careful consideration needs to be exercised to determine how much space will be required to facilitate the conventions Awards Banquet.

Often times a venues large room is subdivided to host multiple convention activities, and then reset for the Awards Banquet. When this is done, it is important to allow the venue sufficient time to reset the room.

Components for the room setup include seating for the attendees, a speaker podium, possibly on a riser, table(s) for awards audio/visual equipment, and a cash bar. If the meal is served buffet-style, additional space will be needed for the buffet line.

Venues will have either 60” or 72” rounds. A 60” round can seat a maximum of 8 people. A 70” round can seat a maximum of 10 people. Having fewer seats at each table will provide the attendees a more comfortable and enjoyable experience.

Layouts / On-Site Operating Sessions

An option during a LSR convention is to have operating sessions on-site at the convention venue. There is no setup requirement from the venue as a modular layout will be brought in to occupy the vacant space. The required space is contingent on the layout(s) that will be brought to the venue.

Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting

Including the LSR Officers, Directors and Chairs, there are twenty-six (26) individuals on the LSR Board of Directors. A room with either Conference, Hollow Square, or Open-U seating will be needed for the Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting. Additional seating for possible guests might also be needed.

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Meeting and Banquet Space Requirements				
Activity	Number of Participants	Minimum Space Requirement	Days / Times Needed	Special Requirements
Registration	4+ Flow		Thursday – 3:00pm – 10:00pm Friday – 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 10:00pm	
Board of Directors Meeting	26		Thursday Afternoon or Evening	Conference or U-Shape for 26 people. Extra chairs around room perimeter.
Rail Clinic 1	40	Minimum 750+ sf, 1,000+ sf is preferred	Thursday – 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Speakers table to side with 2 chairs. Theatre seating for 40 people. Space for LCD Projector and Screen.
Rail Clinic 2	40	Minimum 750+ sf, 1,000+ sf is preferred	Thursday - 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Speakers table to side with 2 chairs Theatre seating for 40 people. Space for LCD Projector and Screen.
Rail Clinic 3	40	Minium 750+ sf, 1,000+ sf is preferred	Thursday - 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Speakers table to side with 2 chairs. Theatre seating for 40 people. Space for LCD Projector and Screen.
Non-Rails Clinic 1	25		Thursday - 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Discuss with Non-Rails Chair. Can be set Classroom, Conference or Rounds.
Contest Room	4+ Flow	Minimum 1,000+ sf	Thursday - 4:00pm – 11:59pm Friday - 12:00am – 11:59pm Saturday - 12:00am – 4:00pm	20 to 30 tables, minimum of 30' wide. 10 chairs. Access to electrical outlets. Lockable door!!!

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Meeting and Banquet Space Requirements				
Activity	Number of Participants	Minimum Space Requirement	Days / Times Needed	Special Requirements
Awards Banquet	150 - 175		Saturday - Reception – 6p–7p Dinner – 7p–8p Presentations – 8p–10p	Rounds of 8 preferred, especially with 60” tables. Risers and Floor Podium. Tables for Awards. Plated or Buffet Meal.
Annual Membership Meeting	40		Can be integrated into clinic schedule.	Speakers table to side with 2 chairs. Theatre seating for 40 people. Space for LCD Projector and Screen.
Raffle (Optional)	Flow		Thursday - 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Can be at Registration Desk or A different location. Items display preferred to not be accessible to the general public.
Silent Auction (Optional)	Flow		Thursday – 4:00pm – 10:00pm Friday - 8:00am – 10:00pm Saturday - 8:00am – 4:00pm	Tables for work crew. Tables to display auction items. Security.
Layouts (Optional)	Flow	Coordinate with Modular Club		

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LSR Regional Convention Venue Check-Off List

Convention Name			
Convention Dates			
Venue Name			
Venue Contact Name			
Venue Contact Phone / Email			
Does venue have three rooms for Clinics that will seat approximately forty (40) people theatre style with room for Head Table and A/V equipment?			Yes No
Rail Clinics	Room Name	Size (dimensions & total square feet)	Maximum Theatre seating
Clinic Room 1			
Clinic Room 2			
Clinic Room 3			
Does the venue have an additional room for Non-Rail activities that will seat approximately 25 people conference style? Will also be used for the Annual Board of Directors Meeting.			Yes No
Non-Rail	Room Name	Size (dimensions & total square feet)	Maximum Conference seating
Non-Rail Room			
Does venue have an additional room for the Contest that will accommodate 20 to 30 6'x30" or 15-22 8'x30" tables? (Minimum 1,000 square feet are preferred).			Yes No
Contest	Room Name	Size (dimensions & total square feet)	Extra charge for tables?
Contest Room			Yes No
Can Contest Room be locked when not in use?	Yes	No	
Is there a charge to change lock and receive keys?	Yes	No	Extra Charge \$ _____
Can the Contest Room be available to convention staff 24 hours per day?	Yes	No	
Awards Ceremony / Banquet	Room Name	Size (dimensions & total square feet)	Maximum Banquet Seating
Awards / Banquet Room			
Does room have a built-in stage or can venue provide risers?			Yes No
If using risers, is there a charge for risers?			Yes No
Does room have an in-house audio/visual system?			Yes No
Is there a charge for in-house A/V system?	Yes	No	Charge \$ _____
Will room accommodate 150 to 175 people banquet style?			Yes No
Food & Beverage can be provided by (circle all that apply)	Venue		Outside Caterer
Registration			Location
Is an area available for a Registration Desk?	Yes	No	
Does area have an electrical outlet available?	Yes	No	Charge \$ _____
Will non-convention attendees have access to this area?	Yes	No	
Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting	Will take place on Saturday afternoon/evening 1 or 2 weeks before Superbowl Sunday.		
Will venue provide a complimentary meeting room for the mid-year Board of Directors meeting to seat a minimum of 20 people Conference style?			Yes No
Hotel			
Are function rooms inside or adjacent to a hotel?			Yes No
If at hotel, can hotel provide 40 – 60 rooms on peak convention nights?			Yes No
If convention will have a Silent Auction or on-site layouts, additional meeting rooms will be needed.			

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Hotel Contracts

Hotels are essentially important to the Lone Star Region (LSR) conventions because they provide the critical physical facilities and services for the guest lodging, clinics, displays, banquets, and food presentations. A favorable contract is one of the most important elements to a successful convention. Many of the provisions in hotel contracts are standard throughout the hotel industry. The contracts vary in length with some being very direct and to the point in 6 pages while others contain extraneous provisions in 15 pages.

The most important thing to remember about any contract is that it is an enforceable legal document which must be adhered to or face the consequences. The Lone Star Region and its officers are ultimately responsible for things in which the region is involved, and that includes the LSR conventions. Most hotels are part of a huge corporation with deep pockets, so it is not quite a level playing field for us. With attendance at our LSR conventions now being around 150 people and guestroom pickup averaging 40 to 50 rooms on peak nights, the LSR conventions are not large enough to command the most favorable terms and prices. Hopefully some of the information contained herein assists in achieving favorable contract terms.

It is critical to read the fine print throughout the contract. Some unfavorable restrictions may be hidden in a totally unrelated provision in a back part of the contract, or in a totally separate document. An example is a provision that states a hotel guest cannot bring any food or beverage not purchased from the hotel into a guestroom. That prohibits the long-time LSR convention favorite of having punch and home-made cookies in a hospitality room. Do not be surprised if the provisions are most favorable to the hotel. Frequently these undesirable restrictions can be negotiated out of the contract. However, you must search them out and act accordingly.

Good contracts will have a low food and beverage minimum guarantee with a reasonable fixed price for the banquet meal, and a room block without a guarantee penalty.

It is a good idea to always carry a copy of the executed contract with you whenever you have a discussion with the hotel staff. **The cardinal rule is to get everything concerning the hotel and/or venue in writing, signed by a person in authority at the hotel/venue. All changes from the original contract should be added as an addendum, in writing, and again signed by a person in authority.**

Following are examples from past hotel contracts, both with favorable provisions, and with less than favorable provisions.

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Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

The terms of hotel/venue contracts will vary from location to location, some being more favorable for the LSR convention, with others being less favorable. Some of the terms might be able to be negotiated, some might not. Before executing any contract, the “fine print” (Conditions of Agreement, Meeting Guidelines) should be closely reviewed in an effort to make the contract terms favorable to both the LSR and the Convention Host Group.

A hotel/venue might provide a contract for consideration, but might not include specifics on the terms of the contract. If not already included, always ask for the terms of the contract.

It may not be possible for all “favorable” terms noted below to be included as part of a single contract. Consider the “big picture” when determining the best way to proceed, that will best benefit the LSR and Convention Host Group.

Some examples to watch for are;

<u>Item</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Less Favorable</u>
Contract Decision Date	Allows sufficient time for comparison of all contracts and presentation to the LSR Board of Directors for approval.	A short time-line to execute the contract before the negotiations are no longer valid.
Contract Cancellation Policy	Contract includes a “Force Majure” clause that allows for contract to be cancelled due to Acts of God, Civil Disorder, Natural Disasters, etc. Includes a reasonable attrition clause, based on a sliding scale, in the event that contract needs to be cancelled without just cause.	Does not include a Force Majure clause. Does not include an attrition clause, or requires 100% payment of anticipated revenue if contract is cancelled.
Sale and Purchase Agreement	Contract includes a clause that states that the terms of the contract will remain in force, regardless of a change in management, management company, and/or property owner.	Contract does not include a Sale and Purchase Agreement.
Prepayment for Expenses	Does not require prepayment for convention expenses, or deposit/prepayment terms fall within the timeline of loans noted in the LSR By-Laws, Article V, Section 9. Final deposit payment is due just prior to the convention, when the majority of convention attendees have already registered for the convention, preferably one week prior to the convention.	Full prepayment is due at the time that the contract is signed, or outside the timelines noted in the LSR By-Laws for loans to the convention Host Group.
Venue Administrative Fees	Contract does not require a surcharge for venue personnel to do their job/provide planning services for the convention.	Venue imposes a surcharge for supervisory, sales, convention service management, etc. to fulfill their responsibilities of working with the convention. Note: These fees could be subject to a service charge/gratuity and sales tax.

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Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

<u>Item</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Less Favorable</u>
Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting	Complimentary meeting room for the Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting. Usually scheduled on a Saturday afternoon or evening, 1 or 2 weeks before Superbowl Sunday	Imposes a charge for the meeting room for the Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting.
Hotel Rooms for Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting	Discounted convention group room rate or better is provided for the Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting. Occupied room nights from mid-year meeting are factored into the total occupied room nights for the convention.	Discounted convention group room rate or better is not provided for the mid-year meeting. Occupied room nights for mid-year meeting are not added to total of occupied room nights for convention.
Board of Directors Meeting at Convention	Meeting room to seat approximately 25 people in hollow square, u-shape or conference style, on first date of convention but before regular convention activities begin, at no charge.	Not having a meeting room for the Board of Directors meeting, and/or charging for use of the meeting room.
Complimentary Hotel Rooms Based on Occupied Rooms	Convention will receive one complimentary room night for every forty (40) or less occupied room nights. Minimum required occupied room nights might be fifty (50). Complimentary guestrooms can be credited after the convention, if not set as free during the guests stay.	No complimentary room nights are provided based on the groups occupied room nights. Complimentary guestrooms must be arranged in advance, and if the number of room nights earned is not utilized during the convention, adjustments will not be made at the end of the convention.
Hotel Room Block Dates/Rates	Discounted group room rate will be extended for two days before and two days after (shoulder dates) the dates of the group room block.	Discounted group room rates are only available on the dates noted in the contract.
Hotel Resort Fee	Hotel room rates do not include a charge above and beyond room and tax charges. This also applies to a Tourism Improvement District (TID) charge.	Hotel room rate is subject to an addition "Resort Fee" that includes access to hotel amenities (Spa, Exercise Room) that may not be utilized by convention attendees and/or a TID fee.
Hotel Room Pick-Up Penalty	Regardless of the number of rooms that the hotel has set aside (room block) for the convention, there is not a penalty if a minimum of _% of the room block rooms are not actually occupied.	A minimum percentage of the room block is required to be occupied. If the minimum is not met, the convention is responsible for paying for the shortfall.

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Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

<u>Item</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Less Favorable</u>
Attrition Clause for Hotel Room Pick-Up Penalty	If a contract includes a minimum guarantee requirement, there is an attrition clause with a sliding scale decreasing the amount of the penalty based on the increased number of guestrooms picked-up.	Regardless of the number of guestrooms picked-up, the maximum penalty will be applied.
Hotel Room Block Cut-Off (deadline) Date	<p>Cut-off date to make hotel room reservations and receive the discounted group room rate is three (3) weeks or less prior to the beginning of the convention. (30 days is common).</p> <p>Discounted group room rate will be extended beyond the cut-off date and if more rooms are reserved than in the room block, provided that accommodations are still available.</p>	<p>Cut-off date to make hotel reservations and receive the group's discounted rate is thirty (30) days or more prior to the beginning of the convention. (30 days is common).</p> <p>Discounted group room rate will not be extended once the group block is picked-up or beyond the cut-off date.</p>
Hotel Reservation Cancellation Policy	Hotel reservations can be cancelled by 6:00pm on the day of the scheduled arrival date, or one (1) day prior to the scheduled arrival date, without incurring a cancellation charge. If prior to the arrival date, a specific time of day should be noted.	<p>Hotel reservations must be cancelled a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours or more before the scheduled arrival date to not incur a cancellation charge.</p> <p>Guest must pay for the entire length of stay if room reservation is cancelled.</p>
Hotel No-Show Policy	Guest will be charged for one (1) night room and tax charges if their reservation is not cancelled and they do not arrive on the scheduled reservation date.	Guest will be charged for more than one (1) nights room and tax charges, up to the entire length of the reservation stay, if their reservation is not cancelled and they do not arrive on their scheduled reservation date.
Displaced Guests / Walk Policy	If the hotel is unable to honor a guest's reservation, the hotel will pay for a guest's room and tax charges, at a comparable type of hotel, for the duration that the hotel is not able to honor a guest's reservation. (Note: If the hotel notifies the guest that there is a room available, and the guest chooses not to return to the hotel, the hotel is no longer responsible for paying for the guests stay at a different location).	There is not a Displaced Guest / Walk Policy.
Early Departures	Guest is not charged for nights that they do not actually occupy a guestroom, providing that they check-out before the published check-out time.	Charge for one (1) or more additional nights if the guest checks-out before the originally scheduled departure date.

Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

<u>Item</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Less Favorable</u>
Package Shipping	Allows for packages to be shipped to the venue in advance of, or during a convention without incurring any fees. (Some time restrictions might apply).	Venue imposes a fee for receiving packages in advance of, or during the convention. A fee might also be imposed for delivery of packages.
Convention Signage	Promotional/directional signage is permitted in the hotel's lobby, making it easier to locate convention activities and possibly recruit non-members to attend the convention.	Convention signage is only permitted in the immediate proximity of where convention activities are taking place.
Convention On-Site Registration/Check-In Desk	Convention is permitted to have the on-site registration/check-in desk near the hotel's registration desk, especially on the primary starting convention dates.	Convention on-site registration/check-in desk is not permitted near the hotel's registration desk nor in the hotel lobby.
Meeting Room Rental	No charge or minimal charge based on the overall amount of money spent by the convention and convention attendees for group meals, sleeping rooms, incidentals, etc. If there are charges for meeting rooms, a service charge/gratuity is not added to the cost of the meeting room.	A hotel might try to charge full rates for meeting space, not taking the big picture into consideration. Once set, our meeting rooms usually do not require set-up changes, saving the venue on their labor expense. Hotel might impose a charge for meeting rooms if the hotel room pick-up and Food & Beverage guarantee is less than the contracted amounts. A service charge/gratuity is added to the cost of meeting room rentals.
Meeting Room Assignments	A change of contracted meeting room assignments must be agreed upon with the convention. There may be a deadline to make these changes.	Venue retains the right to change meeting room assignments that are noted in the contract.
Meeting Room Set-Ups	No charge for tables, chairs, tablecloths, etc. A Banquet Event Order (BEO) should be provided in advance of the convention for every meeting room that details the dates/times, room set-up, meals, audio/visual equipment, etc. and charges, if any, for all items.	Imposes a charge for tables, chairs, tablecloths, etc. Venue does not provide information detailing the arrangements and expenses for every meeting room/function space and event. Additional charges are imposed for meeting room set-up arrangements.
Exceeding Scheduled Amount of Time Using Meeting Rooms/Mean Functions	There is no additional charge (meeting room rental, labor overtime) if convention activities extend later than the original specified schedule.	Venue imposes additional charges for meeting room rental and/or staff charges if convention activities are longer than originally scheduled.

Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

<u>Item</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Less Favorable</u>
Wi-Fi and Electrical Access	No charge for internet connection or use of existing electrical outlets.	Has charges to access Wi-Fi and electricity. Charges might include access, labor and materials.
LSR Audio/Visual Equipment	Allows convention to use audio/visual equipment owned by the LSR and / or the Host Group.	Does not permit the convention to use audio/visual equipment owned by the LSR or Host Group unless a surcharge is imposed.
Venue In-House Audio/Visual Equipment	Allows the convention to reserve and use audio/visual equipment owned by the venue without a charge for use of the equipment and without a set-up fee.	Imposes a fee, plus tax, plus service charge for use of audio/visual equipment owned by the venue.
Third Party Audio/Visual Equipment	Allows convention to get bids and rent audio/visual equipment from a company based on the convention's decision.	Mandates that convention must rent needed audio/visual equipment from the company that the venue has an agreement with.
Food & Beverage (F&B) Pricing	Pricing noted in contract is guaranteed, or a maximum amount is specified. If not, a maximum percentage increase is noted. (This is important when creating a convention budget).	Venue has the right to set menu prices after the terms of the contract have been agreed upon. This might be close to the convention dates, making it impossible to create an accurate budget.
Food & Beverage (F&B) Meal Vendor	Allows the convention to use any vendor to provide snacks and meals for convention activities. (This could result in vastly reduced expenses for F&B events).	Requires that convention uses in-house or preferred vendor for F&B events. Often this is non-negotiable, however the question should still be asked.
	<p>In some circumstances, a hotel contract might have a provision that allows for an outside caterer to be used, but the convention must pay a surcharge to the hotel if this is done. This should be looked at very closely, and do the math! Using 100 meals as an example, a hotel might charge \$35.00++ for a meal, and the same or similar meal from an outside vendor might be \$20.00++. The hotel expense would be \$3,500.00++, and the outside vendor expense would be \$2,000++. If the hotel provision for using an outside caterer is a \$500.00 surcharge, the convention would save \$1,000.00++. If this provision is exercised, the outside catered is customarily responsible for providing everything (dishware, flatware, etc.) associated with the meal. The hotel might also impose an additional cleanup charge.</p>	
Meal Guarantee	Having the flexibility to change the number of meals outlined in the contract, without restrictions/penalties. Providing the final meal guarantee only a few days prior to an event.	The convention is required to pay for the entire number of meals specified in the contract, regardless if of how many meals are actually served.
Meal Preparation Above Guaranteed Amount	Hotel/Caterer agrees to prepare 3% - 5% meals over the meal guarantee. This could cover any last minute's convention walk-in registrations.	Hotel/Caterer will only prepare the number of meals guaranteed, with no overage. This could create a challenge

Favorable and Less Favorable Terms in Hotel Contracts

Item	Favorable	Less Favorable
Hotel Staff Minimums	Example: If having a Cash Bar at the Awards Reception, staff billing is only charged based on the amount of time used. Cashier and Bartender are one person.	Having a required time minimum longer than what is needed. Having separate charges for a Cashier and a Bartender.
Cash-Bar Set-Up Fee	No charge to set-up a Cash Bar.	Fee to set-up a Cash Bar.
Cash Bar Minimum	No minimum amount required for Cash Bar sales.	If minimum amount of Cash Bar sales is not met, the convention is required to pay the difference.
Parking Fees	No charge for parking, or if a charge, allows for In/Out privileges throughout each day, including locals that might not be overnighing at the hotel.	Charge for parking. Parking charge does not include In/Out privileges.
Hidden Charges	Provides a Pricing Menu for any and all possible items, regardless if included in the contract. Example: Lock on Contest Room will need to be changed to limit access.	No Pricing Menu is provided. Hidden charges are not disclosed. Example: Fee for not using in-house audio/visual vendor.
Service Charge / Gratuities	Review the percentage amount of Service Charge / Gratuity and compare to each potential contract. Service charges can range from 20% to 30%, and can have a significant impact on convention expenses. The service charge is usually not negotiable.	
Sales Tax	Sales Tax is added to everything, including the Service Charge/Gratuity. Calculations for everything (meals, service fees, add-on's) should be all inclusive when determining registration and resale amounts. If the Host Group has an exemption from Sales Tax, make sure to provide the venue with the necessary tax exemption information. When reviewing arrangements for the convention, make sure that Sales Tax is not listed. Before paying any bills, get a break-down of all expenses and make sure that Sales Tax is not included.	

Expenses for items listed as less favorable could quickly add up and make the overall convention expenses cost prohibitive. Serious review of these items, if applicable, is required before agreeing to the terms of a contract.

It is highly unlikely that all “favorable” items will be part of a contract. With strong negotiating skills, some less favorable items might be able to be modified to the benefit of the convention. If there are any special considerations that are discussed but not included in the contract, all special considerations should be documented in writing and acknowledged by both the venue and the convention, even for the most minor items. Hotel personnel changes are not uncommon, making it very important to have all negotiations and considerations documented in writing and acknowledged by both parties.

Remember that in accordance with the LSR By-Laws, Article V, Section 6, the Regional Convention Committee must review and approve all contracts before they are executed.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

LSR Convention Comparison Reports

A Convention Comparison Report is used to provide consistent data with realistic comparisons. By having this information about what has been done in the past, a Convention Chairman and their Convention Committee will be better informed about the best courses of action. Therefore, it is important to always provide complete and accurate reporting.

An important caveat to the Convention Comparison Report is that the numbers listed on these comparisons are only a tiny part of the significant details in the LSR Convention Financial Report. Since not every adjustment is included on the LSR Convention Comparison Report, some items may not “total” correctly. For example, you cannot simply subtract the meal costs and other expenses from the total income to get the net income or the amounts distributed to the LSR and Host Groups. It is necessary to review the complete Convention Final Reports to get the essential data that created the information on the Convention Comparison Report.

By having this information about what has been done in the past, what it cost, and whether or not it was successful or not, a convention chairman and the Board of Directors will be better informed about the best courses of action to follow. It is imperative that all annual conventions use standardized forms and practices, providing future convention hosts with solid historical data for the planning of each annual convention.

The Convention Comparison Reports in Detail

The Convention Comparison Reports are intended to be a straight forward report, showing the major aspects of a convention being Convention Attendance, Meals and Hotel use. Other relevant information is sometimes included for specific conventions.

Registration & Activities

Detailed Registration information is obtained from the Final Convention Financial Report, and is always the primary source of revenue for any convention. On the Comparison Report, the number of attendees is listed for Rails, Non-Rails, Youth (paying for registration) and Day Passes. If the registration rate increased during the registration period, the rate shown is the “Early Bird” rate, when most convention registrations occur. A convention has the option to increase the amount for registrations after the “Early Bird Deadline”. When this is done, it creates a savings incentive for convention attendees to register early.

The comparison report also includes information about activities held during each convention. Having activities in addition to the clinics can help to stimulate convention registrations and to provide convention attendees options to enjoy when attending a regional convention.

Meals & Hotel Rooms

The closer to the convention beginning date, the Convention Chairman often must “guarantee” a specific number/cost of meals that the convention becomes obligated to pay for. The comparison report shows the number of meals guaranteed compared to how many were actually served. Note that some conventions have had more meals served than guaranteed. It is important to maintain constant communications with the caterer to make sure that there are sufficient meals for all convention attendees. Also, meals prepared by the in-house vendor tend to be more expensive than those provided by an outside vendor. Using an in-house caterer becomes a major part of a conventions budget. When permitted, explore the possible cost savings by using an outside caterer.

Hotel room comparisons include the hotel name, room rate, room block versus required minimum guarantee, and the actual of room nights occupied. There is a delicate balance between making sure that there are enough rooms set aside specifically for the convention and the minimum required number of occupied room nights to

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

LSR Convention Comparison Reports

avoid a penalty to the convention. Consider historical trends based on recent years and geographic location when determining the number of rooms needed. Another factor to consider is the overnight cost of the hotel room, as travel expenses can be the most expensive aspect of attending a regional convention. If the hotel is perceived as too expensive, convention attendees might choose a less expensive hotel, and the convention will not get credit for the room pickup for individuals not staying at the host hotel

Hotel Room Night Blocked & Picked Up

The Hotel Room Night Blocked & Pick-Up report has a day-by-day breakdown. Note that several years ago convention activities started on Wednesday, generating several room nights for Wednesday night. More recently convention activities begin on Thursday afternoon/evening, reducing the need for rooms on Wednesday night. However, if there is an activity such as Operating Sessions on Wednesday or early activities on Thursday, a small number of rooms might need to be blocked for Wednesday night.

The guaranteed room pick-up number must be actually rented by the convention attendees or else the hotel may often charge the convention a substantial penalty. When there are not enough hotel rooms rented by convention attendees, it may be far less costly to the convention to just rent/pay for the number of rooms required to meet the guarantee and let them sit vacant rather than paying a larger contractual penalty. The number of rooms needed and ultimately rented is very hard to predict in the future, so the convention should get a Daily Pick-Up Report from the hotel(s) during the convention, especially if there is a contractual guarantee that must be met. Daily hotel pick-up information will also be needed to complete the Convention Final General Information and Convention Final Accounting Reports.

Hotels will often extend the groups discounted room rate one or two nights before and after the primary dates, and include the occupied room nights in the group's total.

Convention Registration and Activities Report

Under the "Registration" column heading on the report, the Rails, Non-Rails, Youth (Youths for which registration is paid), and Day Fares are listed. Amounts shown are before the Early Bird Discount expired or Late Fee was added. The Registration amounts are strictly noted for reference. Actual Registration amounts should be based on a detailed budget. Activities information such as Layout, Prototype and Non-Rail Tours is often based on the convention's location and availability of activities other than clinics, but can be used to provide a general idea of what can be planned as part of the LSR convention.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Registration & Activities

Convention	Registrations			Activities						
	Type		Number	Clinics	Layout Tours	Prototype Tours	Operating Sessions	Other	Non-Rail Clinics Tours	
2001 Dallas – Fort Worth	Rails	\$75	226	22	46	4	0		13	2
	Non-Rail	\$75	50							
	Youth	\$45	10							
	Day Pass		5							
	Total		291							
2002 San Antonio	Preregistered		146	No information available						
	Walk-Ins		23							
	Total		169							
2003 Lubbock	Rails		79	15	9	2	0		3	3
	Non-Rail	\$55	28							
	Youth		4							
	Day Pass		1							
	Total		112							
2004 Houston	Rails	\$55	159	35	28	2	12	Zube Park RR Rides & BBQ	5	1
	Non-Rail	\$55	57							
	Youth	\$40								
	Day Pass	\$12	9							
	Total		225							
2005 Fort Worth	Rails		168	23	28	2	15		5	1
	Non-Rails	\$60	35							
	Youth									
	Day Pass		2							
	Total		205							
2006 San Antonio	Rails	\$75	139	22	11	2	23		4	2
	Non-Rails	\$65	55							
	Youth	\$15	4							
	Day Pass	\$25	10							
	Total		208							
2007 Hill Country Special	Rails	\$86	142	49	18	2	6	Bertram Flyer Train Ride & Dinner	10	2
	Non-Rails	\$86	43							
	Youth	\$12	12							
	Day Pass	\$35								
	Total		207							
2008 Houston	Rails	\$88	135	25	15	3	7	Zube Park RR Ride & BBQ	6	1
	Non-Rails	\$88	42							
	Youth	\$40	3							
	Day Pass	\$26								
	Total		190							
2009 Irving	Rails	\$68	175	33	49	3	16	Grapevine to Fort Worth RR Ride	7	1
	Non-Rails	\$68	46							
	Youth	\$45	6							
	Day Pass	\$25	9							
	Total		236							
2010 San Antonio	Rails	\$89	117	23	19	3	8	TX Train Museum	3	2
	Non-Rails	\$89	32							
	Youth	\$45	5							
	Day Pass	\$30	17							
	Total		171							

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Registration & Activities											
Convention	Registrations			Clinics	Layout Tours	Activities					
	Type		Number			Prototype Tours	Operating Sessions	Other	Non-Rail		
								Clinics	Tours		
2011 Lubbock	Rails	\$79	101	20	8	3	1	Wind Power Museum	2	1	
	Non-Rails	\$79	26								Harvey House Nat’l Ranching & RR Museum Pyco Cotton Seed Oil Extraction
	Youth	\$40	10								
	Day Pass	\$28	5								
	Total		141								
2012 Houston	Rails	\$85	144	26	19	3	56	Zube Park RR Ride & BBQ	5	3	
	Non-Rails	\$85	36								Post Terminal Rail METRO Operation Center
	Youth	\$50	6								
	Day Pass	\$30	5								
	Total		191								
2013 Irving	Rails	\$79	146	47	34	2	45	Operation Bootcamp	4	2	
	Non-Rails	\$59	37								UP Davison Yard BNSF Control Center American RR Museum
	Youth										
	Day Pass	\$15	11								
	Total		194								
2014 Cen-Tex Round Rock	Rails	\$85	140	49	36	3			4	3	
	Non-Rails	\$85	38								LCRA Car Repair Georgetown Railroad Austin Steam Train Wimberley Live Steam
	Youth	\$50	4								
	Day Pass	\$35	10								
	Total		192								
2015 Beaumont	Rails	\$90	76	No information available.							
	Non-Rails	\$75	20								
	Youth	\$50	9								
	Day Pass	\$30	1								
	Total		106								
2016 Fort Worth	Rails	\$75	164	No information available.							
	Non-Rails	\$55	34								
	Youth	\$40	9								
	Day Pass	\$35	4								
	Total		211								
2017 Houston	Rails	\$80	113	17	28	2			5	2	
	Non-Rails	\$50	30								GBW Railcar Service METRO Rail Facilities
	Youth	\$50	6								
	Day Pass	\$35	7								
	Total		156								
2018 Round Rock	Rails	\$75	140	45	25	2		Bob Bullock TX History Museum Round Rock Outlet Mall Round Rock-Georgetown Sightseeing	2	3	
	Non-Rails	\$75	38								Austin Steam Train Capitol Metro Rail
	Youth	\$40	4								
	Day Pass	\$40	9								
	Total		192								
2019 Frisco	Rails	\$75	155	31	16	1			3	2	
	Non-Rails	\$75	8								American RR Museum
	Youth	\$40	6								
	Day Pass	\$40	2								
	Total		172								

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Convention Registration & Activities

Convention	Registrations			Clinics	Layout Tours	Prototype Tours	Operating Sessions	Other	Non-Rail	
	Type		Number						Clinics	Tours
2020 Pasadena	Rails	\$75	135							
	Non-Rails	\$50	25							
	Youth	\$50	1							
	Day Pass									
	Total		161	No information available.						
2021 Tulsa, OK	Rails	\$60	135	20	11	0			1 Philbrook Museum	1
	Non-Rails	\$30	18							
	Youth	\$30								
	Day Pass	\$30								
	Total		153							
2022 Temple	Rails	\$65	126	37	13	0			2	
	Non-Rails	\$60	15							
	Youth									
	Day Pass	\$20	17							
	Total		158							
2023 NMRA National Convention - Grapevine				Skewed data due to being a national convention.						
2024 Pasadena	Rails	\$80	121	22	9	0			3	0
	Non-Rails	\$50	29							
	Youth	\$40								
	Day Pass									
	Total		150							
2025 Baton Rouge, LA	Rails									
	Non-Rails									
	Youth									
	Day Pass									
	Total									
2026 Cen-Tex	Rails									
	Non-Rails									
	Youth									
	Day Pass									
	Total									
2027 Trinity River	Rails									
	Non-Rails									
	Youth									
	Day Pass									
	Total									
2028 South Texas	Rails									
	Non-Rails									
	Youth									
	Day Pass									
	Total									
2029 Cowcatcher	Rails									
	Non-Rails									
	Youth									
	Day Pass									
	Total									

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Meals & Hotel Rooms

Convention	Registrants	Banquet Meals Guaranteed / Served	Banquet Meal Cost	Hotel Room Rate / Brand	Hotel Block / Guarantee	Hotel Actual Pick-Up
2001 Dallas–Fort Worth	291	315 / 315	\$24.00	\$79.00 Harvey	275 / 245	229
2002 San Antonio	169			\$	120 /	148
2003 Lubbock	112	134 / 127	\$23.84	\$70.00 Holiday Inn	210 /	
2004 Houston	225	240 / 233	\$23.45	\$65.00 Holiday Inn	/ 140	245
2005 Fort Worth	205	205 / 160	\$31.52	\$70.00 Holiday Inn	175 / 175	257
2006 San Antonio	208	250 / 244	\$26.53	\$99.00 Doubletree	220 /	240
2007 Austin	207	240 / 232	\$16.55	\$84.00 Wingate	200 / 160	247
2008 Houston	190	170 / 183	\$34.10	\$75.00 Holiday Inn	255 / 240	248
2009 Irving	236	200 / 245	\$36.70	\$98.00 Sheraton	220 /	250
2010 San Antonio	171	160 / 174	\$51.00	\$90.00 Holiday Inn	230 /	
2011 Lubbock	141	130 / 141	\$48.10	\$85.00 Holiday Inn	230 / 184	183
2012 Houston	191	200 / 204	\$31.42	\$70.00 Hilton	200 / 180	223
2013 Fort Worth	194	179 / 185	\$30.39	\$96.00 Sheraton	220 / 175	219
2014 Round Rock	192	209 / 180	\$17.45	\$90.00 Wingate	241 / 175	228
2015 Beaumont	106		\$35.00	\$95.00 Holiday Inn	/	
2016 Fort Worth	211	/ 191	\$35.00	\$96.00 Sheraton	220 / 175	
2017 Houston	156	143 / 135	\$49.00	\$ Hilton	200 / 160	
2018 Round Rock	192	195 / 207	\$20.00	\$90.00 Wingate	170 / 170	226
2019 Frisco	172		\$9.00 Dessert Buffet	\$ Drury Inn	153 / 0	163

Convention Meals & Hotel Rooms

Convention	Registrants	Banquet Meals Guaranteed / Served	Banquet Meal Cost	Hotel Room Rate / Brand	Hotel Room Block / Guarantee	Hotel Actual Pick-Up
2020 Pasadena	161				/	
2021 Tulsa, OK	153		\$7.00 Dessert Buffet	\$ Embassy Suites	102 / 92	153
2022 Temple	158	125 / 125	\$16.95	\$89.00 Hilton	170 / 0	101
2023 Grapevine	Information not included due to being NMRA National Convention.					
2024 Pasadena	150	N/A		\$75.00 La Quinta	/	112
2025 Baton Rouge			\$30.00	\$110.00 Holiday Inn	157 / 0	
2026 Cen-Tex D4						
2027 Trinity River D3						
2028 South Texas D6						
2029 Cowcatcher D1						

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide
Room Nights *Blocked & Picked Up*

Year	Location	Hotel Rate	Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
			Block	Pick Up	Block	Pick Up	Block	Pick Up	Block	Pick Up	Block	Pick Up	Block	Pick Up
2001	D-FW	\$79	-	-	-	-	25	68	125	91	125	90	-	
2002	San Antonio	\$70	-	-										
2003	Lubbock													
2004	Houston	\$65	-	-	10	43	40	62	40	72	50	68	-	1
2005	Fort Worth	\$70	-	-										
2006	San Antonio	\$99	-	-	-	14	60	70	80	78	80	75	-	3
2007	Hill Country	\$84	-	-		49		68		68		62		
2008	Houston	\$75	-	-	45	51	65	62	65	68	75	66	-	1
2009	Irving	\$98	-	-	30	46	50	69	70	72	70	62	-	1
2010	San Antonio	\$90	-	-	-		70		80		80		-	
2011	Lubbock	\$82	-	-	10	34	70	51	70	49	70	48	10	2
2012	Houston	\$70	-	-	20		65		65		50			
2013	D-FW	\$96	-	5	30	50	50	54	70	60	70	51	-	4
2014	Round Rock	\$90				52		59		61		56		
2015	Beaumont	\$95												
2016	Arlington	\$96												
2017	Houston													
2018	Round Rock	\$90				46		63		65		48		4
2019	Frisco					2		53		58		50		
2020	Houston													
2021	Tulsa, OK	\$106				29		43		44		36		
2022	Temple					10		26		26		23		16
2023	NMRA National													
2024	Pasadena	\$75			roh	4	roh	37	roh	39	roh	32	roh	14
2025	Baton Rouge	\$110	-		22		45		46		37		7	
2026	Cen-Tex D4													
2027	Trinity River D3													
2028	South Texas D6													
2029	Cowcatcher D1													

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Financial & General Information Convention Reports

The Official LSR Convention Reports

The Lone Star Region (LSR) Convention Reports are the standard uniform way for presenting statistical, hotel, registration, and financial information about our conventions. For these reports to be of genuine value to the future convention chairmen and to the LSR Board of Directors, the data must be uniform from year to year. These reports, with substantial updating or changes, has been completed by each convention for decades. As part of this Convention Planning Guide, copies of the convention report from all LSR conventions since 2001 are in a separate large notebook. The information from these reports can be extremely valuable in planning your convention. Then after your convention, your report will likewise help future convention planners. For your report you will be provided with customized blank copies of the LSR Convention General Information Report (in Microsoft Word format) and the Convention Financial Report (in Microsoft Excel format).

General Information Convention Report



The General Information part of the Convention Reports provides listings of the personnel that made the convention possible, clinics presented, layout tours, prototype tours, Non-Rail activities, Youth activities, convention hotel accommodations and room guarantee data, and non-hotel facilities information. It is prepared using Microsoft Word.

The Committee Chairpersons and Assistants portion of the General Information Convention Report lists several possible responsibilities/positions that a Host Group might have. This section can help to stimulate the thought process of what aspects of a convention that the Host Group might include in their convention. Host Groups are encouraged to have several people on their Convention Committee, allowing each person to focus on their area of responsibility. If a Host Group's convention does not have an activity listed, simply delete the appropriate lines from this section of the General Information Convention Report.

Add rows in the Clinics, Layout Tours, Convention Activities for Non-Rails section as needed. Information in these sections can help future conventions with ideas, and minimize repeats, when possible/desired.

The Room Nights Blocked and Picked-Up section is extremely important as it will provide historical information that future conventions can use when negotiating their hotel contracts. This information is also included on the Convention Financial Report, which includes a detail of room types occupied.

The Comments, Suggestions, and/or Advice section of the report is extremely important to review the Host Groups convention, and as a learning tool for future conventions. While every convention is similar, every convention is also different. Sharing out-of-the-box thinking, commenting on convention planning/activities that were successful, making suggestions, and providing advice on how to avoid unfortunate surprises or how to make a convention more successful, will benefit future conventions to provide a positive convention experience for the Host Group, LSR and the convention attendees.

The General Information Convention Report is designed in a table format. Where there is a , enter the appropriate information in place of the .

The General Information Convention Report follows.

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Lone Star Region

General Information Convention Report

Convention Name:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Convention Dates:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Convention City:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Convention Headquarters:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
General Chairman:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Committee Chairpersons and Assistants	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Registrar:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Treasurer:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Clinics:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Layout Tours:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional, but preferred)
Prototype Tours:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Contest:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(requires Judges)
Operating Sessions:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional, but recommended)
Concierge:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Publicity:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Printing:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Raffle:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Hospitality Room Host:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Timetable:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Non-Rail Tours:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional, but recommended)
Non-Rail Clinics:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(recommended)
Arts & Crafts Contest:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional, but recommended)
Company Store:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Contest Award Plaques:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(coordinate with LSR Contest Chair)
Decorations & Centerpieces:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Convention Photographer:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Layout Photographer:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(if having layouts tours or operating sessions)
Web Master:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Security:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(recommended)
Banquet Coordinator:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	REQUIRED
Door Prizes:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional, but recommended)
Volunteer Coordinator:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decals:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(optional)
Municipal Relations:	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	(if required)

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- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Banquet Audio/Visual: | - | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Live Steam: | - | <input type="checkbox"/> (optional) |
| Bus Charter: | - | <input type="checkbox"/> (optional) |
| Guest Speaker Coordinator | - | <input type="checkbox"/> REQUIRED |
| Auction: | - | <input type="checkbox"/> (optional) |
| Video / Movie Room: | - | <input type="checkbox"/> (optional) |
| — | - | <input type="checkbox"/> |

CONVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR RAILS

CLINICS

Number of Clinics for Rails:	Number of Clinic Sessions
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Clinician's Name</u>	<u>Clinic Subject</u>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(Insert additional rows for all clinics / clinicians)

LAYOUT TOURS

Number of Layouts Open for Visitation: <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>		
<u>Layout Owner</u>	<u>Scale</u>	<u>Location (City Only)</u>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(Insert additional rows for all layouts)

CONVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR NON-RAILS

Number of Non-Rail Clinics:	Number of Non-Rail Clinic Sessions
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Clinician's Name</u>	<u>Clinic Subject</u>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(Insert additional rows for all Non-Rail clinics / clinicians)

Non-Rail Activities, other than Clinics:

	# Buses	# Cars
Activity 1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Activity 2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Activity 3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(Insert additional rows for all Non-Rail activities, other than clinics)

Cabooses

Were special activities provided for Cabooses?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Please give a brief description:

CONVENTION HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

If the Convention was held in a hotel, please complete the following questions. If a hotel was not used for the Convention, skip to the next section.

Name and location of the hotel:

Was space provided for a registration counter? Yes No

Number of breakout (Meeting) rooms used, for Rail Activities:

for Non-Rail Activities:

for Other Activities:

Were fees charged for the use of breakout rooms? Yes No

Were the fees based on sleeping room pickup? Yes No

Minimum Guaranteed Payment, Which Must Be Paid to Hotel per Contract \$

Other Hotel Contract Payment Penalties (State reason and amount)

ROOM NIGHTS BLOCKED AND PICKED-UP

Night	Room Nights Blocked	Room Nights Picked-Up
Tuesday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Wednesday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Thursday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Saturday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Sunday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total Room Nights	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Contracted group hotel room rate(s): \$

Per hotel's contract, Minimum number of room nights which must be picked-up before penalty payment is evoked:

How many complimentary sleeping rooms were provided?

This number was based on a required pickup of sleeping rooms.

Was adequate vehicle parking available, at no cost? Yes No

Was the Saturday Banquet catered by the hotel? Yes No

How many Banquet meals were guaranteed? How many served?

Was a catered Sunday Breakfast included as a part of the convention? Yes No

Was the Sunday Breakfast catered by the hotel? Yes No

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How many Breakfast meals were guaranteed?

How many served?

Are there comments, suggestions, and/or advice, which could be useful to the Chairs of future Lone Star Region conventions? Please provide specific and detailed information and expand the size of this section as needed.

(This is extremely helpful information. Please complete and share your experiences to benefit future conventions)

NON-HOTEL CONVENTION FACILITIES

If the Lone Star Region Convention was held in a facility other than a hotel, such as an exposition center, please complete the following:

Name and location of the facility:

TRAIN SHOW STATISTICS

Provision of the information pertaining to a Train Show is at the option of the Host Group's General Chairman of the Lone Star Region Convention. The sole purpose of the collection of this information is for the benefit of future Lone Star Region Conventions who may contemplate hosting a Train Show in conjunction with a Lone Star Region Convention.

Was a Train Show held in conjunction with the Convention?

Yes

No

If a Train Show was conducted, what was the location of the show?

Please provide general information about the Train Show, such as who was in charge, how were vendors or distributors selected, how many actually set-up; charges for tables, etc. that would be beneficial to future Convention Chairs.

FINANCIAL DATA AND RECONCILIATION

The Financial Data and Reconciliation section of the Lone Star Region Convention Report is prepared in a separate Microsoft Excel file under the name of:

And is hereby incorporated into the Convention Report by reference.

Signed: Date:

Title:

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Financial Report

To prepare the Convention Financial Report, it is important to keep up with the convention expenses by the categories, using the Convention Chart of Accounts. Please caution those who are entering information into these reports to not change the categories or formulas without checking with the Regional Conventions Chairman because the report is loaded with calculations and/or reference formulas in most cells. If warranted, the Regional Conventions Chairman will make the changes and send a revised report back to them.

Although the Financial Convention Report is intended to be the final financial report to be submitted to the LSR, the report should be used starting on day one when financial activity begins. This could eliminate the need to duplicate information from a different type of software/spreadsheet used to track convention financial activity. Making entries on the “Ledger” sheet starting with the very first convention transaction, and updating with every new transaction, will eliminate the need to make extensive entries at the conclusion of the convention.

There are several sheets that comprise the Convention Financial Report. Each sheet is intended to address specific financial activity for the convention. Sheets on the Convention Financial Report include Important Notes, Chart of Accounts, Summary, Shared, Auction, Non-Shared and Ledger. The majority of the information on each sheet is generated from data entered on the Ledger sheet. A review of each sheet is;

“Important Notes” sheet is a review on how the Convention Financial Report works. If there are any questions, contact the LSR Conventions Chairman.

“Chart of Accounts” sheet has the Code for each type of income/expense. It is important to use the correct code in the Code column on the Ledger sheet, otherwise the data will not calculate properly into the proper sections of the Convention Financial Report. Never use the single-digit department code, always use the sub-account code that best describes the transaction.

On the “Summary” sheet of the Convention Financial report, enter the name of the convention, location (city) of the convention, dates of the convention, and the names of the Convention Chairman and Convention Treasurer. These areas are shaded in **light green**, and the shading will disappear once an entry is made. The Report Date will be entered when the final report is submitted to the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman. The only other information that will need to be entered on the “Summary” sheet is the hotel room nights contract and pick-up information, and the “Penalties if short” information. All other information on the “Summary” tab will automatically be entered/calculated based on the information entered on the “Ledger” tab. In the sample below, areas to be manually completed are shaded in green.

Summary	
Convention:	
Location:	
Dates:	
Chairperson:	
Treasurer:	
Report Date:	

Hotel Room Nights Summary					
Day	Contract	Actual			Short
		King	Double	Total	
Wednesday				0	0
Thursday				0	0
Friday				0	0
Saturday				0	0
Other Days				0	0
Totals	0	0	0	0	0

Penalties if short:	

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Convention Financial Report

The "Shared" sheet shows all convention activity for convention income and expenses that are shared between the Host Group and the LSR. On the "Shared" sheet, the majority of the information will automatically be entered/calculated based on the information entered on the "Ledger" sheet. The only information on the "Shared" sheet that needs to be manually entered are in the "Amount" column, being the amounts for registration fees, the facility fee (if applicable), and the number of meals Served and Guaranteed, Not Served, as well as the price for the meals. These areas are shaded in light green, and the shading will disappear once an entry is made. If there is no information to be entered, enter a zero "0" to remove the shading. The "Notes" column is a free format area that can also be used to include relevant information/explanations.

Shared Income and Expense							
Code	Description	Quantity	Amount	Income	Expense	Profit/Loss	Notes
1	Registration	0		\$	\$	\$	
1.1	Primary Registrant (NMRA Member)			\$	\$	\$	
1.1.1	Early Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.1.2	Normal Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.1.3	Late Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.2	Secondary Registrant (Non-Rail)			\$	\$	\$	
1.2.1	Early Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.2.2	Normal Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.2.3	Late Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.3	Minor Over 6 years			\$	\$	\$	
1.3.1	Early Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.3.2	Normal Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.3.3	Late Registration			\$	\$	\$	
1.4	Minor 6 years and under			\$	\$	\$	
1.5	Day Pass			\$	\$	\$	
1.5.1	3 Day			\$	\$	\$	
1.5.2	2 Day			\$	\$	\$	
1.5.3	1 Day			\$	\$	\$	
1.6	Facility Charge			\$	\$	\$	

2	Banquet			\$	\$	\$	Food & Service
2.1	Banquet Meal Only			\$	\$	\$	
2.1.1	Served			\$	\$	\$	
2.1.2	Guaranteed, Not Served			\$	\$	\$	

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

Convention Financial Report

The “Auction” sheet displays information from a Silent Auction, if one is done as part of a LSR Convention. After income and expenses are calculated, 90% of the net profit goes to the Seller, 5% goes to the LSR, and 5% goes to the Host Group. The amount for the “Seller” is generated from the information entered on the “Ledger” tab. The 5% distributions to the LSR and Host Group will need to be manually calculated and entered. These areas are shaded in light green.

Silent Auction Income and Expense

Code	Description	Quantity	Amount	Income	Expense	Profit/Loss	Notes
8	Silent Auction			\$	\$	\$	
8.1	Silent Auction Proceeds			\$	\$	\$	
5.2	Silent Auction Payment			\$	\$	\$	
8.2.1	To Sellers (90%)			\$	\$	\$	
8.2.2	To LSR (5%)			\$	\$	\$	Enter manually-
8.2.3	To Host (5%)			\$	\$	\$	Enter manually-
8.3	Silent Auction Expenses			\$	\$	\$	Forms, software

The “Non-Shared” sheet is used to identify all income and expenses that are 100% due to the Host Group or to the LSR or NMRA. Non-Shared items for the Host Group include a Raffle and Company Store (shirt, patches, pins) sales, if done as part of the convention. The LSR portion of Non-Shared is the \$10.00 per capita for the Primary NMRA Member Registrant for the convention and if applicable, the LSR loan information. Information for the NMRA is any funds collected and to be paid to the NMRA for NMRA Memberships or Rail pass’. All other information on the “Non-Shared” sheet is automatically generated from the information entered on the “Ledger” sheet, with the exception of the “Notes” column, where information can be entered if desired.

Non-Shared Income and Expense

Code	Description	Quantity	Amount	Income	Expense	Profit/Loss	Notes
10	Host Items			\$	\$	\$	
10.1	Raffle Income			\$	\$	\$	
10.2	Raffle Expenses			\$	\$	\$	
10.3	Sale Items Income			\$	\$	\$	Shirts, decals, car
10.3.1	Shirts – Attendees			\$	\$	\$	
10.3.2	Shirts – Staff			\$	\$	\$	
10.4	Sale Item Expense			\$	\$	\$	
10.4.1	Shirts – Attendees			\$	\$	\$	
10.4.2	Shirts – Staff			\$	\$	\$	
10.4.3	Shirt Fees			\$	\$	\$	Setup charges, etc.

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The "Ledger" sheet is the heart of the Convention Financial Report. The Convention Financial Report will track all income and expenses by category, track how many registrations (by type) have been made, extra meal tickets purchased, and basically the vast majority of all convention financial and statistical information. Information entered on the "Ledger" sheet will automatically be completed on the majority of the remaining Convention Financial Report. To accomplish this, the correct "Code" **MUST** be used on the "Ledger" sheet of the Convention Financial Report, in the "Code" column. When making entries in the "Amount" column, all income must be entered as a positive amount, and all expenses must be entered as a negative amount.

There are five time periods for making entries on the "Ledger" sheet of the Convention Financial Report. They are;

- Early Registration – "Early Bird" period when discounted registration is available.
- Normal Registration – period between Early and Late Registration.
- Late Registration – period between the end of Normal Registration and the beginning of the convention.
- At Convention – period during the convention taking place.
- Post-Convention – period after the end of the convention.
- Closing – not used, except to show the amounts of the disbursements to the LSR and the Host Group, as calculated on the "Summary" tab.

On the "Ledger" sheet, enter the appropriate date(s) in the Memo column for the dates that Early Bird registration begins and ends, the dates that Normal registration begins and ends (row cells shaded in light red with red text. Again, there are five (5) time frames when date(s) information needs to be entered.

Making entries in the correct time periods will identify trends, that will provide helpful information when completing the General Information Convention Report, and to assist future conventions to compare their activity to past conventions.

The information in the Date, Account, Number, Payee, Memo and Notes is all free-format. Using the proper (account) code in the "Code" column and the corresponding "Amount" will automatically populate information on the Summary, Shared, Auction and Non-Shared tabs. Of the columns on the "Ledger" sheet;

- Date – date that the transaction takes place
- Account – bank name, cash, check or credit card payment processor
- Number – check or invoice number
- Payee – could be income type, or person/company that a check is written to
- Memo – best practice is to enter who/what the transaction is for
- Code – very important to use the correct code, avoid using main category codes when sub-category codes are available and applicable. This is one of the pieces of information that will automatically complete the majority of the rest of the report.
- Description – a description of the code, including primary category and all subcategories.
- Amount – remember that all income is entered as a positive amount and all expenses are entered as a negative amount
- I/E – based on the amount (positive or negative) in the "Amount" column, will automatically display I for income or E for expense
- Balance – a running balance, based on each individual amount entered.
- Notes – free format area to make any notations relevant to each entry. This is not required, but sometimes helpful, especially when making out-of-the-ordinary entries.

IMPORTANT: DO NOT delete or add rows, as this could prevent the report from working properly. If any rows need to be removed, it is okay to Hide any unused rows or the Ledger sheet. If any rows need to be added, send the Convention Accounting Report to the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman.

Although this report it is intended to be the FINAL Convention Accounting Report, the Host Group is encouraged to make entries into the "Ledger" sheet as they occur, starting with the very first financial transaction. This will not

Lone Star Region Convention Planning Guide

only eliminate the need to make all the entries after the end of a convention, but will also provide current up-to-date financial information for a convention.

If you should ever have any questions or issues with the Convention Financial Report, do not hesitate to contact the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman.

There is an additional sheet titled “Budget vs. Actual”. This is not a part of the “official” convention financial report, but can be used to track the conventions progress when compared to the conventions budget. It is required to keep information on the “Ledger” tab updated in order to provide accurate information. In the budget column, all budgeted income is entered as a positive amount, and all budgeted expenses are entered as a negative amount.

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Required LSR 501c3 Reporting

All LSR Annual Conventions are considered a part of the LSR, regardless with who the Host Group may be. The LSR has a 501c3 designation as a Not-for-profit educational entity, and is subject to an audit from the United States Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service. Therefore, every convention must adhere to the follow 501c3 requirements;

Maintain a 3-ring binder, keeping information in chronological order, with a tab to separate the following information.

1. Copy of monthly bank statements.
2. Bank deposit slips, if any.
3. Copy of deposited checks and payment processor statements.
4. Copy of checks written to pay vendors and other bills, or copies of electronic statements that include copies of checks.
5. Copy of payment detailed transactions reports (from Square, Stripe, PayPal, etc.).
6. Copy of any receipts for miscellaneous items.
7. Any pertinent emails or other documentation (optional).
8. Copies of bills from vendors.
9. Final tab
 - Copy of final convention budget tracking report.
 - Copy of final Convention Financial Report.
 - Copy of insurance.

The completed 3-ring binder should then be provided to the LSR Treasurer.

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Income and Expense Estimations – “What-If’s”

Income and Expense Accounting

After the excitement of deciding to host a Lone Star Region (LSR) convention cools a little, the next questions are: How much is it going to cost? How much money will we take in? and Who will take the important role of keeping up with everything?

A lot of money must be carefully accounted for. The convention treasurer must have basic accounting experience; be an experienced user of Microsoft Excel, and have sufficient time to handle the big responsibilities. A separate bank account must be established so that convention funds are not comingled with other host group or division funds.

For several years an extensive accounting application called the “LSR Convention Financial Report” has been used to make the bookkeeping easy and uniformly consistent. The report utilizes standard accounting procedures to handle every type of income and expense. It was developed using Microsoft Excel, so it is extremely flexible and can accommodate the unique situations of LSR conventions. Since the data has been standardized, it is possible to reliably compare different conventions more accurately.

What-If Development

To provide a method whereby the convention planners could have good estimates of income and expenses based on many variables, a “Income – Expense “What-If” Estimations” worksheet has been developed. It uses the same methodology as the Convention Financial Report combined with an order form approach of how many items at a given price determine the total amount. It carries that estimation of income and expenses to a grand total, hopefully showing a profit, but possibly a loss. What we want to know is how to avoid that loss. How many convention registrations at what rate are necessary to cover the variable and fixed expenses of a convention?

The Convention Income and Expense “What-If” Estimations worksheet, illustrated herein and available on the LSR Google Drive, shows basic assumptions, such as registration fee, total meal expense including service charges and taxes, penalties, and other large expenses. In the Income Projections part, the income from various sources is multiplied by for (4) different estimates of the number of registrations. For example, if the registration fee is \$89.00 and if 125 members pay that amount, the income is calculated by the application to be \$11,125.00. If the registration increases to 150 members, then the income increases to \$13,350.00. All that is necessary to see the effect of different registration fees is to enter the proposed fee and the number of registrants and the application completes the calculations. It is highly recommended saving a “Master Copy” before modifying any formulas so that you can make a recovery, if needed.

In the Expense Projections portion the usual types of expenses commonly incurred at LSR conventions are listed although some expenses might not apply to each year’s convention. Under the Hotel Contractual Expenses, the prices from the hotel’s contract are listed plus applicable service charges and taxes. This is usually the largest expense.

In the Unit Cost column, the total or per item amount is entered. This Unit Cost and the quantity in each sample column are calculated by the embedded formulas in the Extended Cost column to derive the Extended Cost for each of the four (4) different number of registrations in the Income section.

At the bottom portion of the “Income – Expense “What-If” Estimations” worksheet it shows the total expenses and the profit or loss derived from the above entries. It easily shows the impact different registration fees and/or different number of registrations will have on the bottom line. Likewise, the impact of different expenses, such as meal costs or printing, will be easily shown.

Each of the various estimates can be saved under a unique file name. It is recommended showing the file name at the top of each file. Remember to save a “Master Copy” to go back to if needed.

The What-If’s provide a powerful and customizable tool to determine the finances of a convention.

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Convention Income and Expense “What-If” Estimations

Information Based On Number of Registrations

Room Night Commitment =				Food & Beverage Guarantee =					
Income Projections									
Item	Rates	Example 1		Example 2		Example 3		Example 4	
		If Have This No. Registrant	This Income Is Produced	If Have This No. Registrant	This Income Is Produced	If Have This No. Registrant	This Income Is Produced	If Have This No. Registrant	This Income Is Produced
Registration									
Full Fare Registrations (Early Bird)									
Full Non-Rail Registration (Early Bird)									
Full Fare Registrations (Regular)									
Full Non-Rail Registration (Regular)									
Registration Totals			\$		\$		\$		\$
Other Income									
Additional Banquet Sales									
Auction Commissions									
Ad Sales									
Other Income Total			\$		\$		\$		\$
Total Income			\$		\$		\$		\$

	Unit Cost	Quantity	Extended Cost	Quantity	Extended Cost	Quantity	Extended Cost	Quantity	Extended Cost
Hotel Expenses									
Hotel Penalty for Low Registration									
Clinic Rooms – 3 days									
Contest Room – 3 days									
Non-Rail Room – 3 days									
Auction Room – 3 days									
Layouts Room – 3 days									
Banquet Meal Cost									
Bar Cost									
Additional Banquet Meals									
Banquet Audio/Visual									
Service Charge Percentage	%								
Sales Tax Percentage	%								
Hotel Expenses Subtotal			\$		\$		\$		\$
Miscellaneous Expenses									
Hotel Rooms for Officials, Etc.									
Advertising									
Auction Supplies									
Printing – Name Badges									
Printing – Timetable									
Printing – Other									
Door Prizes									
Contest Room Supplies									
Awards (Non-LSR)									
Bank Service Charges									
Base Credit Card Processing Fee									
% Credit Card Processing Fee									
Decorations									
Speaker									
Security									
Operating Session Return									
Miscellaneous Expenses									
Total Miscellaneous Expenses									
Total Expenses			\$		\$		\$		\$
Net Profit or (Loss) from Convention			\$		\$		\$		\$
Adjustments to Gross Income									
Per Capita Fee – By-Laws	\$10								
Net Adjusted Profit / (Loss)			\$		\$		\$		\$

Distribution of Funds									
Payments Due to LSR									
Per Capita Fee	\$10		\$		\$		\$		\$
50% Distribution of Net Profit (Loss)			\$		\$		\$		\$
Total Payments to LSR			\$		\$		\$		\$
Payments Due Convention Host Grp									
50% Distribution of Net Profit (Loss)			\$		\$		\$		\$
Total Disbursements to Host Group			\$		\$		\$		\$

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LSR Audio-Visual & Other Equipment

The Lone Star Region has an extensive inventory of audio/visual and other equipment to fulfill the basic needs of a LSR Convention. It is the responsibility of each year's convention host group to maintain proper care and control of the equipment.

At the conclusion of each year's convention, that years Host Group will transfer the equipment to the next years Host Group. As part of the transfer, the following form must be completed, and a copy is to be sent to the LSR President and the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman. It is recommended that the "From" Host Group also keep a copy for their records.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Received</u>
All		_____
LCD Projector – Epson 760HD	3	_____
6' Projection Screen	3	_____
Projector Table	3	_____
Document Camera – Ipevo VZ-X	1	_____
Square Credit Card Processing Kit	1	_____
HDMI to HDMI Cable – 50'	2	_____
HDMI to HDMI Cable – 25'	3	_____
HDMI to HDMI Cable – 4'	1	_____
HDMI to USB Mini Cable – 2.5'	1	_____
VGA to VGA Cable – 2.5'	1	_____
HDMI Splitter Hub	1	_____
HDMI AC Adapter	1	_____
Extension Cord – 50' Orange	1	_____
Extension Cord – 25' Orange 3-Outlets	2	_____
Extension Cord – 25' Black	1	_____
Extension Cord – 15' White	1	_____
Extension Cord – 10' White 3-Outlets	1	_____
Extension Cord – 8' Green	3	_____
Power Strip – 3-Outlets	3	_____
Power Strip – 6-Outlets	4	_____
Metal Tri-Fold Photo Display	2	_____
Easels	6	_____
Dry Erase Boards – 36" x 24"	4	_____

Received From	_____	_____	_____
	Name (Please Print)	Signature	Date

Transferred To	_____	_____	_____
	Name (Please Print)	Signature	Date

After transfer of LSR A/V and Other Equipment, send a copy of this completed document to the LSR President and the LSR Regional Conventions Chairman.