

## MID-STATES CONVENTION PLANNING GUIDE

### MEMBERS AS OF 2024

Arkansas Oklahoma Astro Soc-AOAS  
 Astro Soc of E. Missouri-ASEM  
 Astro Assn of S.E. Missouri-AASEMO  
 Astro Soc of Kansas City-ASKC  
 Astro Soc of NW Arkansas-ASNWA  
 Astro Assoc of Lawrence-AAL  
 Astro Club of Tulsa-ACT  
 Bartlesville Astro Soc-BAS  
 BA Sidewalk Astronomer-BASWA  
 Central Arkansas Astro Soc-CAAS  
 Central Missouri Ama Astro-CMAA  
 Eastern MO Dark Sky Observers-EMDSO  
 Kansas Astro Observers Soc-KAO  
 NE Kansas Ama Astro League-NEKAAL  
 Northeast Nebraska Astro Club-NENEAC  
 Omaha Astro Soc-OAS  
 Platte Valley Astro Observers-PVAO  
 Prairie Astronomy Club-PAC  
 Springfield Astro Society-SAS  
 St. Louis Astronomical Society-SLAS  
 Sugar Creek Astro Soc-SCAS

### Central Missouri Amateur Astronomers - Kansas City, Missouri



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 MSRAL Regional Council  
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# WHY THE MID-STATES REGION OF THE ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

The Astronomical League had early roots back to the 1939 Cushing New York World's Fair but was officially formalized after the second World War on August 30, 1947. The Mid-States Region formed in 1949, became official in 1950 and joined the League. MSRAL has a 75-year history of hosting conventions among the clubs in the region. Currently, the membership on this cover, totals 22 clubs with an Executive Officer Council and a very active and responsive Regional Council leadership. MSRAL has yielded notable Astronomical League Presidents, Russell Maag, Gene Tandy, John Willcox and Carroll Iorg. In addition, Jackie Beucher was actively involved in the region and the national level simultaneously for about 35 years. The national headquarters for the Astronomical League is in MSARAL, at Kansas City, MO.

This region has many educators who work in tandem with, or on staff with college and university physics and astronomy departments, as well as many talented amateur astronomers. This region also has some historic observatories and an old, and well-established club that is a centurion, while others are octogenarians. Out of the 21 clubs there are 11 observatories in this region all used for community outreach and member observing and surveys of sky phenomenon. MSRAL is the home for three nationally ranked star parties, Nebraska Star Party, Heart of America Star Party and Okie Tex Star Party (roots in MSRAL who helped form the Texas Star Party in the 90s).

In addition, there are several Observing Program Coordinators in this region: Observing Programs courtesy of Brad Young from Astronomy Club of Tulsa, are Alternate Constellations, Solar Eclipse, and Earth Orbiting Satellites. Foundations of Imaging developed by Dan Crowson, from the Astronomical Society of Eastern Missouri. Programs created by Steve Boerner, Member-at-Large, are Astronomy Before the Telescope, Spectroscopy and Radio Astronomy. The Master Imaging, Comet, Meteor, Sun spotter, and Messier Observing Programs are courtesy of Scott Kranz, from Astronomical Society of Kansas City. Kathy Machin from the Astronomical Society of Kansas City coordinates the Dark Nebula and the Southern Skies Observing Programs. Robert Togni from Central Arkansas Astronomical Society oversees the Carbon Star and authored the Variable Star and Variable Star Binocular Observing Programs. In addition, he proposed and wrote the Lunar Evolution Observing Program. In fact, the whole Astronomical League Observing Program originated from the Omaha Astronomical Society Junior Society group back in 1963 with their Messier Observing Program that issued pins and certificates to their student astronomers. It was Bob Wright, Jr. the National Activities Coordinator who mentioned to AL President, Gene Tandy, that this youth program should be extended to adult members.

Other key coordinators are Mike Modrcin for the League's Astronomy Day who is from Omaha Astronomical Society and the other is Peggy Walker from Broken Arrow Sidewalk Astronomer as the STEM and Accessible Outreach and Jr. Activities Coordinator.

The annual rotation of the conventions is from the committed Regional Council/club presidents that spotlight local club members, professional members, historic observatories and museums/libraries and facilities in the MSRAL region. Because of this commitment, MSRAL has a 68-year-old Amateur of the Year Award that celebrates hard working members in the region at the annual banquet with notable guest speakers.

Of course, besides the longstanding friendships, there are countless partnerships on projects, papers and research that has been occurring for many decades. Overall, this is a most congenial, supportive group of astronomers and time spent with these individuals is time well spent.

## MSRAL CONVENTION PLANNING GUIDE

In 1949, at the 100-year-old Morrison Observatory in Fayette, Missouri the Mid-States Region was formed 75 years ago and continues to allow for the member states of NE, KS, OK, MO and AR to present talks and/or demonstrations about the science of astronomy, new equipment, and technology, observing and imaging strategies, outreach, STEM engagements and telescope-making. To ensure the passing of this tradition to the next generation, documenting this process was of most importance.

At the 2023 MSRAL Convention Business Meeting, it was brought up that the region wanted a planning guide so new hosting clubs will have guidelines and a procedural manual. It was also suggested that as we move forward, that if there are new things that are encountered, or good ideas to consider for the future, that this guide is open for revision and additions. (see MSRAL Business Meeting Minutes June 10, 2023)

Historically, a club, a couple of clubs, or a group of members have planned and executed the annual convention which is established in the original bylaws under – Article IV, Section 1 that is also tied to a new Standing Resolution #8. Archived records show since the creation of the Mid-States, the planning has been done by a convention chair and a committee, and not supposed to be by the Regional Chair or Vice-Chair as it has never been listed as Executive Officer duties – Article II, Sect 7a & 7b. This process is now better defined in the updated bylaws (found at MSRAL.org under Documents) with the better-defined Convention Planning Committee and Standing Resolution #8 to expand on their realm of authority and operational responsibilities. (See Bylaws Article IV Regional Convention: Sect. 1.)

## **HOSTING**

MSRAL Conventions usually can be solicited by The Executive Council and Regional Council or by club leadership coming forward. The goal is to have one to two clubs already committed and are working on their convention to not have to figure out and scramble to get hosts for the coming year. The next year's Convention Chair and hosting organization is announced at the yearly convention business meeting, and they present the when and where.

**Location Selection:** Mid-States has great leadership and many educators that have added to the success of our conventions as they have through the years, partnered with universities, colleges, planetariums, nature parks, science centers and dark-sky sites. Convention locations have been very diverse and each year there are often more than one facility or building for the whole weekend. MSRAL sometimes has been at a single site that provides all the meals, accommodations, lecture hall, business meeting space, banquets space, AOY lunch meeting room, vendor space and registration/visiting space. MSRALs have also been at multiple sites. Friday night with registration, is held one place, the business meeting and lecture hall, with the banquet at a third place. The Convention Planning Committee is solely responsible for deciding on location as they may want to include their facilities or local tourist sites based on their partnerships.

**Date Selection:** MSRAL runs from Friday afternoon to Sunday early afternoon and is held in June, the month of our founding, but it is not cast in concrete. The Convention Planning Committee needs to consider moon phase since clubs have scheduled outreach or club observing nights planned around those. With Memorial Weekend, and the end of the school year in May. In the past a convention has been held with eclipses not happening in June. Considerations also need to be made for local festivals, star parties, national or religious holidays, state fairs, graduations, sporting events, and moon phases if an observing event is being considered due to hotel availability.

Another option stated in Bylaws Article IV Regional Convention: Sect. 5, which is that "if a National Convention of the Astronomical League is being hosted by a MSRAL group or society in a given year, the MSRAL Convention Planning Committee may elect to consider making it the MSRAL Convention of that year."

## **CONVENTION PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Getting the ball rolling starts with the Convention Chair assembling a Planning Committee together also with the Executive Officers ready to guide and direct as needed. Most clubs who plan to host already have their Convention Chair slotted, as well as the Vice Chair and Secretary, and Treasurer. The next step is to get the support network lined up through subcommittee leaders and volunteer for the various aspects of the convention.

With the various clubs in the region, the committee in some clubs is the board, while others engage the whole membership in helping.

### **Convention Chair**

- Signs contracts for convention
- Works with Executive Officer Council
- Makes sure the AOY Selection Committee Chair has the committee meal and meeting space arranged.
- Chairs the convention but not the business meeting as that is done by elected officers only.
- Makes sure the convention schedule runs on time and if derailed, gets the program back on schedule.
- After convention the Convention Chair passes the MSRAL banner or possible signage if applicable, to the new Convention Chair.

### **Convention Vice-Chair**

Usually assumes any responsibility or duties that need to be done or is delegated by the Convention Chair. Every Convention Planning Committee arranges their teams and leadership differently so there is no hard fast job description for this section.

### **Convention Secretary - Treasurer**

- Starts the budget process immediately by using the Budget Template in appendix along with the narrative/explanation on Budget Considerations section, to pursue the costs for the various revenue streams and operating expenses for the convention.
- The treasurer receives subcommittees information to calculate all the costs and expenses.
- The Treasurer opens a convention business bank account, convention business Pay Pal account - separate from club or personal funds.
- Requests seed money for deposits if deemed necessary (see Article VI, Section 5)
- Registration fees once established are sent to the Executive Council to ensure that the fees are not out of range historically for attendees.

### **Role of Executive Officers**

The Regional Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary-Treasurer and Regional Representative are responsible for the running of the region, with the Regional Council but the Regional Chair is the CEO, and all work in tandem with the Convention Planning Committee.

Regional Chair: In the Bylaws Article II, MSRAL Officers, Sect 7a.2 states the Regional Chair plans the Business Meeting agenda and presides over the business meeting. Based on business that needs to be conducted, the chair will set the length of the meeting. Also, if the Regional Chair needs to hold an in-person Executive Council Meeting, they will also ensure there is a room and time for this to take place during the convention. (See Article III, Convention and Meetings, Section 3.) The Chair contacts the upcoming Convention Planning Chair in April or May to have information ready for the business meeting. (See Appendix for letter sample)

Regional Vice-Chair: Although the duties for the Vice-Chair are to mainly be the backup for the Regional Chair, that does not limit their expertise and leadership abilities to aid in the convention planning process.

Secretary-Treasurer: Fiscally, in Bylaws Article II, MSRAL Officers, Section 7.c - Treasurer .6, will issue seed money if the Convention Chair requests the funds up to \$750.00 as stated in Standing Resolution #6. Also, they deposit half of the profits from the convention in the regional treasury. As Secretary, they take the minutes for the business meeting and takes club role call and presents last year's minutes and financial statement for the region. They also keep track of what officer terms are up for the election section of the meeting. At the 2023 Convention a new portable printer was purchased to print the AOY certificate(s) and it was turned over to the Treasurer as previous treasurers have done in the past and they bring it to the AOY Selection Committee Chair to be able to print the AOY Certificate.

Regional Representative: Assembles the membership data for the yearend report to National, helps to promote the convention within the region and to other regions and assists as the Regional Chair or Convention Chair may assign. See Bylaws Article II, MSRAL Officers, Section 7 d.7.

### **AOY Selection Committee Chair**

The AOY Selection Committee Chair is the immediate past recipient and works with the Convention Chair to ensure a small room is available for a working lunch meeting, (food is allowed in the room). Also important is that there needs to be outlets for a printer since the certificate is printed and prepared for the banquet at this meeting. (See Standing Resolution #1 and #8)

## **CONVENTION PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEES/COORDINATORS**

### **Registration Coordinator**

- Works with the webmaster for the payment portal for registration.

- This coordinator also sets up the registration table, coordinates the welcome packets, maps, offers refunds or additional attendees for the convention.
- Has all the meals as a-la-carte on the registration portal.
- Secures volunteers for the registration table.
- Registration form should ask for name, title (if applicable) club affiliation, include club, regional, national and AOY titles, as well as meal selections and contact information.
- Generates name badges from the information from the registration form which can be done through various software applications.
- The registration list should go to the Executive Officers about March/April so they can help solicit more attendees by sending out email reminders or invite other regions.
- Collects feedback forms and gives to the Regional Representative
- Gives the registration list Saturday AM before the business meeting so Regional Chair can welcome any key guests and give a report on attendance at the convention.

### **Publicity Coordinator**

Consider making YouTube or Zoom videos that can be posted on the club website, sent out or on the MSRAL.org website. Many towns have free local newspapers that will put an ad in or the local events magazines are another good place to contact. The Astronomical League is supposed to have a calendar, or cloudy nights post, a T.V. or radio spot, but a flier handed out at the star parties would also be a great idea, but it needs to have all the pertinent information on the flier.

- Works with the Regional Representative to get the information out to MSRAL membership and to other regions.
- They work with the webmaster who is part of this committee to keep the information current on the site and ensures the registration to go live on March 1<sup>st</sup> or sooner since that is the usual date for open registration.
- Gets information out on Facebook of the region as well as individual club pages.
- Generates a flier for regional clubs to add to their club newsletters.
- Sends out emails to Regional Council (club Presidents) to get the information to their clubs.
- Contacts the National League Secretary to have a promotional segment in the League's monthly Global Star Party Live sessions, no less than two months out from the actual event.
- Creates a JPEG of the convention information to send to the editor of the Reflector to add to the newsletter. This image is used because it can fit anywhere in the reflector and be size be adjusted to accommodate the editor with no charge for add placement. If narrative is sent where to copy editor who must create an add, there will be a fee. If key information is done quickly, it is feasible to have an add placed for the September, (due July 1<sup>st</sup>) December, (due October 1<sup>st</sup>) and March issue (due January 1<sup>st</sup>)

### **Food Service Coordinator**

- Solicits caterers/restaurants for meals for Friday night, Saturday lunch, Saturday night banquet and Sunday morning.
- Provides a refreshment table all day Saturday starting at 8:00am to Sunday morning should near but not be in the lecture hall or room as people talk and that will hinder the speaker.
- Ensures the Amateur of the Year Selection Committee has pre-packaged options.
- Schedules volunteers for the refreshment table that is set up throughout the whole convention, needs to be ready for the breaks in the program schedule.

### **Facilities Coordinator**

The various rooms like the lecture room need good visual and audio and wifi access and a person with the ability to set up the tech for the speakers. This room should be set up where no matter where one sits, they will have a good vantage point to the speaker and the screen. Another room set up and design can be a rectangular room with tables and a speaker platform so attendees can see the speaker. Another design is the semi-circular theatre seating like in college lecture halls. A couple of things to be mindful of is the temperature as the summertime rooms tend to be rather cold and people will leave the room if they get too uncomfortable. A key aspect is to be allowed to have food and beverages in the room during presentations.

- Secures the site/locations for the convention talks, banquet, AOY Selection Committee Meeting, MSRAL Business Meeting and other sessions if applicable.

- Provides tables & chairs, outlet location for registration, refreshments, vendors, contests and displays.
- Coordinates the audio/visual needs for the whole convention that includes hands free microphone, laptop and a backup laptop with PowerPoint software.
- Observing site if session is included in the events schedule.
- Ensures any handicap considerations for attendees.
- Signage in the building to direct people to the restrooms if they are not obvious, registration table, etc.
- Place refreshment table to have room for visiting and multiple people able to refill or grab and go with a snack.

### **Program Coordinator**

- Arranges and books the keynote speaker for the banquet.
- Contacts speakers from regional membership clubs.
- Inform convention speakers of their allotted time of 45-minute talk with 10-minute Q & A and having talk on a thumb drive. Other speakers may be slotted for a 30-minute talk.
- Gets speaker titles, short biography and photo for the program and website.
- If applicable, coordinates time for workshops, contests, displays, observing sessions.
- Arranges door prizes and group photo.
- Generates the schedule of events for the weekend.
- Must coordinate with the Regional Chair for time needed for the Business Meeting and AOY Selection Committee lunch meeting.
- Please consider regional speakers that are available on the Speakers Consortium tab at MSRAL.org website who should provide enough variety to encourage registration.
- Allows for time for vendor booth visits with adequate break intervals.
- The most important aspect is the selection of the keynote speaker. The keynote speaker has a Honoria, hotel and meal provision for them and a guest. (Make sure the budget for this is already established).
- The Program Coordinator sends out emails to all the club presidents to get as many clubs involved as possible, since members tend to like to come and listen to their speaker. Our focus has been to promote the topic and not the speakers.
- Breaks are important to have on the schedule for it allows the attendees to walk around, visit vendors, use the bathroom, refresh drinks and the Convention Chair must announce how long the break is and call the group in a few minutes before the start of the next speaker.
- Door prizes are also scheduled throughout the weekend.

### **Hospitality**

- Secures hotel rooms for the Keynote speaker and guest if necessary.
- Arranges transportation needs if applicable for keynote speaker.
- Coordinates rooms for the attendees at a variety of hotels, college dorm rooms etc.
- May coordinate this with having a banquet at a hotel as they reduce room rates for holding an event with them as they make more money with food and beverage.
- Selects a volunteer to gather tourism and local attraction brochures and Group-ons etc. for restaurants, community giveaways, for the registration packets.
- Generates a list/map of eateries in the area for those not participating in the meals for the weekend.
- If a trip to an observatory or other location is planned the attendees should be made aware of this before arrival and any arrangements and maps should be made available for those who do not use google maps on their phones.

**NOTE:** No one on the Convention Planning Committee signs a contract for an official block of rooms because that is a legally and fiscally binding document that allows the hotel to charge us for unused rooms.

### **BUDGETING CONSIDERATIONS**

The purpose of any budget is to provide a road map to project the sources of revenue through registration fees. These sources of revenue have typically been MSRAL Convention registration, barbecue registration, lunch registration and finally banquet registration. To attend the convention registration fees will need to be paid by all attendees. The only fees that are not mandatory are the fees related to the meal but anyone in attendance must be registered due to insurance considerations for all participants/attendees for any unforeseen circumstances.



When working with each revenue stream, the related cost(s) and/or expense(s) will need to be broken down specifically to ensure no costs/expenses are overlooked. The primary one that needs careful attention is the MSRAL Convention registration since it covers all operating expenses not related to meals. The optimum goal for the budget will be to have a modest breakeven point which will not result in a deficit or loss for the hosting organization.

The budget process may appear to be somewhat backwards by accumulating costs prior to determining the related revenue. The reason behind this process is that firm costs for each category can be determined in total, to see what registration fees need to be charged for each revenue stream.

Once the costs have been determined for the operating costs to be covered, a breakdown of the number of registrations will need to be set. A reasonable estimate should consider the number of previous conventions registration trends to better determine a breakeven point. In the past, 50 to 60 registrants have been used to determine the breakeven point. Just keep in mind the estimated number of registrants should be attainable. If the actual number of registrants exceed the breakeven point, income will be generated. Conversely, a loss will occur if the registrants fall below the budgeted breakeven levels.

If the Convention Planning Committee deems it necessary to initiate planning with the available "seed" money loan from the region, they may ask up to \$750.00 to get deposits and things moving forward. Simply contact the Regional Secretary-Treasurer and they will issue a check to the Convention Chair. This loan repayment is not calculated as part of the income or loss at the end of the convention. (See Standing resolution #6). If funds are requested, it is stipulated these MSRAL Convention funds must be held in a separate bank account and is stated in Bylaws Article VI Financial, Section 5, "No regional funds shall be co-mingled with personal funds, in personal bank accounts, or club bank accounts."

## **INCOME**

These sources of revenue have typically been MSRAL Convention Registration, Banquet Registration, Barbecue Registration and Lunch registration. To attend the convention, registration fees must be paid not only to assist in the coverage of expenses, but for insurance purposes as well. The only fees that are not mandatory are the fees related to the meal options and usually are a-la-carte'. The Banquet Registration may be for individuals such as a spouse, that did not attend the convention perse.

Each source of revenue is self-sustaining and yields breakeven based on the projected number of registrations. There should not be a loss on meals as the exact number of meals that have been purchased should be the number of meals ordered. The only exception would be for the Banquet, where the Banquet Registration fee would cover the keynote speaker and one guest. The same would apply to the Barbeque if a speaker were present.

A great hack is – for ease of record keeping, all registration should be rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

### **REVENUE STREAMS See Budget Template IN APPENDIX for detail accounting**

#### **BBQ Revenue Stream is covered by a-la-carte registration.**

The barbecue is held Friday night, and based on location, may include equipment rental or speaker meal(s) based on the location and type of facility. The meal should consist of a few meat selections, a vegetarian option and gluten-free as well. If food is delivered, the delivery cost and possible service fee if people are there to serve the attendees in lieu of self-serve buffet. If the beverages are not included in the meal costs, there needs to be a separate purchase of bottled drinks. To cover any potential expenses that may not have already been considered, include a contingency of 10%.

#### **Lunch Revenue Stream is covered by a-la-carte registration.**

Lunch is held on Saturday anywhere from 11:30 to 1:00 based on the schedule. As a rule, this is held in the same area as the lecture hall or same building. The meal should consist of a few meat selections, a vegetarian option and gluten-free as well. If food is delivered, the delivery cost and possible service fee if people are there to serve the attendees in lieu of self-serve buffet. If the beverages are not included in the meal costs, there needs to be a separate purchase of bottled drinks. To cover any potential expenses that may not have already been considered, include a contingency of 10%.

#### **Banquet Revenue Stream is covered by a-la-carte registration.**

The Banquet is held Saturday night, and based on location, may include equipment rental or speaker meal(s) based on the location and type of facility. The meal should consist of a few meat selections, a vegetarian option and gluten-free as well. If food is delivered, the delivery cost and possible service fee if people are there to serve the attendees in lieu

of self-serve buffet. If the beverages are not included in the meal costs, there needs to be a separate purchase of drinks. Some hosts have had a cash bar beforehand.

If dinner is held in a hotel, they give room discounts since their major profit is food and beverage service. For some attendees the hotel is a major cost that inhibits attendance. In fact, some will give the keynote speaker room as an incentive for booking. At a hotel, there are 8 seated round tables and food is served by wait staff and meals are all inclusive with beverages included. So, tables and audio equipment are now a factor in the cost of the evening event.

To cover any potential expenses that may not have already been considered, include a contingency of 10%.

### **MSRAL Registration Revenue Stream = Operating Expenses**

**Administrative expenses** are critical in determining the MSRAL Registration fee. Once these expenses have been determined by either firm contracts (if a venue is to be rented for the convention) or estimates that are reasonable.

#### **Administrative Supplies includes:**

- Printing, (business meeting agenda, last year's minutes, program schedule, AOY & Hosting list, Deceased list), ink, paper, door prize tickets

#### **Advertising includes:**

- Signage at and around the convention location site or BQ or Friday night observing field.
- A JPEG graphic of the key information to be sent to the editor of the Reflector Magazine (Sept, Dec, Mar & June).
- Signs for inside the buildings or maps to locate bathrooms, what directions the different rooms are located, registration table, etc.

#### **Communications includes:**

- Postage costs as some still use the postal service for registration, Zoom account if used for planning meeting, phone calls, signed physical contract envelope and mailing.

#### **Name Badges includes:**

- Name tag packets

#### **Paper Goods includes:**

- Things for the refreshment table like paper plates, napkins, coffee stirrers, utensils, cups, packets of sugars, creamers

#### **Pay Pal Fees includes:**

- The 3% transition fees charged by PayPal – make sure there is a small cushion put in for the meal and registration charges.

#### **Venue(s):**

- Costs for one or multiple venues/facilities and table or chair rental fees

#### **Refreshments includes:**

- Drinks like coffee, tea, water, juices, sodas
- Morning snacks be breakfast like granola bars, pastries, bagels, yogurt.
- Afternoon snack cheese and crackers, veggie tray, cookies, brownies

#### **Keynote Speaker(s) Stipend:**

- Speaker's Honoria or speaker's fee needs to be reasonable so that the registration fee and other non-MSRAL sources of revenue can cover expenses.
- Big-name speakers can be expensive as travel, honorarium, hotel, meals, and other expenses can often exceed \$2,000.00 per speaker. This results in a cost of about \$40.00 by itself, and if your breakeven is at 50 attendees that will be a make or break to a convention. A main hinderance to attendance has always been the registration fees so it is vital that this is a manageable number.
- Local speaker honorarium of \$100.00 to \$200.00 is ample as they do not have major travel expenses and those affiliated to a MSRAL club tend not to request or accept honoraria.



### **Welcome Packets includes:**

- Program schedule with speaker's bios and topics
- Tourism brochures
- List of local eateries, restaurants
- Convention Host and AOY List, Deceased Members, Convention Feedback Form
- Specialty gifts pins, note pads, pens, magnets, key chains, etc.
- Something to contain the contents, bag, envelope, etc.
- Feedback Form (See Appendix)

### **PLANNING TIMETABLE**

#### **April to June: year before the convention:**

- At least a year before the yearly convention, the Convention Planning Committee is usually in place due to the fact the Executive Council or Regional Council or volunteering clubs may have come forward the year before.
- Public relations start with the next year's Convention Chair giving a presentation at the Business Meeting with handouts, a save the date cards, fliers, brochures or any other promotional items to include in welcome packets or have at the registration table.
- The subcommittees are in place and date and location with possible theme is already decided upon.
- A JPEG with pertinent information date and place if ready by July 1<sup>st</sup>, should be sent to the editor-in-chief of the reflector Magazine to be included in the September issue.
- Convention Planning Committee regular meetings are scheduled and commence.

#### **June to August:**

- Hold monthly Convention Planning Committee Meetings
- Convention Treasurer starts on the budget template to determine revenue streams and operating costs with the help of the subcommittee reports and information.
- Food coordinator develops pricing for the refreshment table so budget can be close to finished.
- Food coordinator makes initial contact for vendors for Friday dinner, Saturday lunch and banquet.
- Facilities coordinator contacts colleges, universities, hotels, city buildings for hosting a convention either at one or multiple sites.
- Registration coordinator determining materials and operating costs for all things needed for administrative costs and expenses.
- Program coordinator finds the keynote speaker and develops the honorarium, hotel and meal(s) cost for the budget.
- Hospitality works on room pricing and other accommodations especially if the banquet is held at a hotel. Works on lists of hotels/motels in the area for all options for the attendees.
- Hospitality also generates a list of all eateries for options for attendees.
- Convention Chair contacts webmaster, Facebook moderator and newsletter editor to make the announcement for the upcoming convention.

#### **August to September:**

- Contact potential vendors
- Post convention date and location on MSRAL.org site, MSRAL Facebook and in the Mid-States Emitter Newsletter.
- Reserve facilities-get personnel contacts, contracts and use previous couple years attendance numbers. As a rule, the facilities should host 50 to 100 people in the speaker hall and banquet room. Put deposits in place.
- Book the keynote speaker.
- Finalize the items for the refreshment table and food vendors are selected.

#### **September to December:**

- Budget should be in place and registration cost is calculated, which is then given to Executive Council for a quick review to help ensure that there is no loss for the hosting organization.
- Book keynote speaker accommodations, budget for honorarium, account for meal(s) for them and a guest
- Start soliciting for door prizes from vendors, clubs and business.
- Make a new add (JPEG) for Reflector with the addition of the keynote speaker and submit by end of September for the October 1<sup>st</sup> submission to editor-in-chief for the December issue.

#### **January to February:**

- Test registration portal and PayPal
- AOY Selection Committee Chair sends out candidate submission letter to presidents and ALCORs.
- Email all member clubs for convention speakers – roster from Mitch Glaze @ league rosters.
- All speaker information, talk title, bios and photos are in and on the registration site and ready to be placed in the program at the convention.
- Send the add (JPEG) for Reflector by December 31<sup>st</sup> submission to editor-in-chief for the March issue. Due to the June convention date, the June Reflector may be released after the convention.

**March to April:**

- March 1<sup>st</sup> live-online registration – special notification of early registration and late registration fees if applicable.
- Confirm vendors and make accommodations for table and display space.
- Have a back-up speaker in case one does not show up last minute.
- Mid-April – resend AOY candidate submission letter to other club leaders, board members like vice president, or secretary, besides president and ALCO to get more submissions if there is a lack of response.
- Develop volunteers for refreshment table.
- Develop volunteers for registration table.
- Generate a list of eateries for those who are not registering for meal options over the weekend.
- Update Executive Council on convention status.
- Secure AOY certificates
- Send the final program schedule to all speakers so they are 1) aware of their time, 2) are able to work out any issues or program change, 3) confirm talk length and Q & A and 4) last minute considerations.
- Mid-April send copy of registrant list to regional representative who will contact clubs who have no members listed
- Start collecting donations.

**May 6 weeks to 1 month:**

- AOY Committee pre-packaged lunch, meeting room set up for AOY Selection Committee
- Print out name badges: **IMPORTANT**
  - Club logo on left corner and MSRAL logo on right corner if possible
  - Centered: First name in larger font, last name below. This format allows it to be read from 3 to 4 feet away.
  - Club affiliation, and title below (if applicable)
  - National and/or regional officers, first name in larger font, last below - then national or regional title then club affiliation.
  - NOTE: ALL AOY RECIPIENTS AND YEAR MUST BE NOTED ON THEIR BADGES
  - Meal selection in abbreviation at the bottom of the badge.
- Final meal count for Friday night, Saturday lunch, and banquet needs to be confirmed with caterers as well as delivery times established.
- Purchase or make external signage, table signage (food) and room signage for location.
- Purchase bags or envelopes for the registration/welcome packet
- Get door prize tickets and container – can pre door prize ticket insertion to back of name badge.
- Have a secure area designated to hold giveaways for the weekend.

**June 2 weeks before convention:**

- Make sure there is cash on hand for non-credit transactions have about \$200.00 in small bills.
- Stuff welcome packets
- Make sure all tables for lobby registration area, refreshment, and vendor areas are all set up, place chairs at appropriate tables – refreshments do not need any.
- Remind Regional Treasurer to bring the portable printer for the AOY Selection Committee
- Audio visual coordinator should have a back-up along with speaker laptop and spare, projector, laser pointer/slide advancer, microphone (preferably lapel-hands free), working sound system – ready to assist speakers with microphone, and thumb drives if necessary.
- Secure a member photographer for the annual group photo and have location in mind.

**Friday of MSRAL convention: (See Convention Checklist)**

- Put up signage to direct people to proper locations.
- Be sure all doors are unlocked, rooms are ready for use, and audio/visual equipment is in place.
- Check out in advance that all media are working correctly.
- Have backup equipment (laptop, video projector, microphone system) available in the event of need.
- Be sure registration materials and personnel are in place.
- Have people available to direct exhibitors and presenters to proper rooms.
- Check to see if refreshments are in place.
- Have any security or parking considerations in operation.
- Make the last check on banquet preparations.
- Set out your cash drawer with money for making change for registration payments.
- Have on-site registrants complete a registration form to be turned over to the treasurer, along with all convention receipts at the end.
- If using a timekeeper for speakers, make sure they are in the line of sight of the speakers usually in the back of the attendees.
- The registration table is open and set up a minimum of 4 hours before the Friday meal.
- Have extra programs at the registration table.

- Have a backup laptop for registration, along with main laptop and printer and paper.
- Have map of facilities of event is amongst buildings.
- Hang MSRAL Banner
- Have all Star B Q arrangements in place.

#### **Saturday of MSRAL before Business Meeting**

- Registration is manned with workers as many attendees come in on Saturday AM
- Have a copy of the registration list with all information for the Executive Officers
- Have refreshment table stocked and ready before 8:00am
- Have lunch delivery set minimum of 45 minutes before the lunch break.
- Make sure AOY lunch and meeting room are set up.

#### **Following MSRAL Convention:**

- Be certain invited speakers can depart in a timely and safe manner.
- Deposit funds after being properly accounted.
- Settle all accounts for local facilities and catering, etc.
- Feedback forms need to be reviewed with the Executive Council to improve next year's convention and hear positive comments on the events and speakers offered that year.
- The treasurer sends any seed money back (if any) to the Regional Treasurer, with the financial statement from the convention and half the profit to be deposited in the regional treasury by July 31st. (See Article IV Regional Convention, Section 4.a and 4.b).
- Write thank you letters or thank the following verbally: sponsors, including the school administration, participants, workers, exhibitors, and especially to colleagues that helped.

## **APPENDIX**

### **AOY CANDIDATE SUBMISSION LETTER**

### **BANQUET AGENDA**

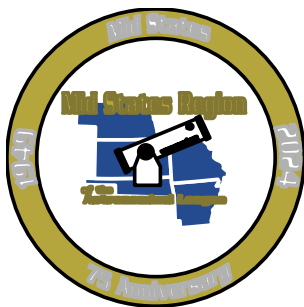
### **BUDGET TEMPLATE**

### **BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA**

### **CONVENTION CHAIR CONTACT LETTER (IN-COMING)**

### **CONVENTION SCHEDULE**

### **FEEDBACK FORM**



## AOY CANDIDATE SUBMISSION LETTER

When pursuing a candidate please make note of Standing Resolution #1 that no previous winners are eligible and that submissions not considered for two years are still eligible for consideration and should be resubmitted the following year. **(make sure to include this phrase)** Currently all candidates need to be present at the MSRAL Convention Banquet so make sure you take that criterion into consideration. Also note that Standing Resolution #5 rescinded the multiple recipients.

When sending the email, the first one sent should go to the Club Presidents and ALCORs with a return due day by March 15<sup>th</sup> and the second one address it to the Vice President and board members in case they want to consider their club president are due back by May 15<sup>th</sup>. The roster for the emails can be obtained from the membership coordinator, Mitch Glaze or from the regional secretary.

**Make sure that the emails are sent out by the AOY Selection Committee Chair and are to be returned to them only. Also note: submissions may be delivered by hand to the AOY Committee Chair at the MSRAL Convention prior to the meeting held at lunch on Saturday.**

These seven areas do not all need to be filled out for a candidate to be considered. Candidates are considered with other candidate submissions during the AOY Selection Committee Meeting.

Candidate Name: Club Affiliation: Title: (if applicable)

Submitter's Name: Contact Email: Title: (if applicable)

Please provide the following that may apply to the candidate:

1. Their record of service through member education.
2. Their record of service through public service to the club, state, region, national or international organizations.
3. How their observing ability with A.L. Observing Programs demonstrated.
4. List any roles as leaders in the club, state, region, national or international organizations.
5. Are there any significant honors or awards from the club, state, region, national or international organizations.
6. What if any, are their outstanding accomplishments in the field of amateur astronomy.
7. How do they participate in MSRAL Conventions and National Conventions.

Sincerely,

NAME:

202? AOY Selection Committee Chair

Email:

## **BANQUET AGENDA**

Welcome by Convention Chair

Eating and visiting

Keynote Speaker

AOY Award

If League President is in attendance, they are given time to greet the attendees and announce Alcon's and any other pertinent information to the dinner guests.

Dismissal

**NOTE:** no club awards are included during this time OR any thank you or recognition to the convention volunteers. However, if new regional awards are developed, they will be included at this time BEFORE the AOY Award.

## BUDGET TEMPLATE

### MID-STATES REGION

#### Income Statement - Budget Template

Prepared by Cook Feldman SLAS 2023  
(Yoda Consulting Inc. LOL)

	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total	
<b>INCOME</b>				
MSRAL Registration **	50	40.00	2,000.00	covers convention operating revenue
Barbecue Registration	50	20.00	1,000.00	costs to generate the convention
Lunch Registration	50	17.00	850.00	need to be itemized
Banquet Registration	50	45.00	2,250.00	
<b>Total Income</b>			6,100.00	
<b>COST OF GOODS SOLD</b>				
<b>Barbecue Expense</b>				fees cover total BBQ expenses
BBQ Equipment Rental				
BBQ Food	50	13.84	692.00	
BBQ Delivery Cost				
BBQ Service Fee				
BBQ Beverage	50	1.10	55.00	
BBQ Contingency		15%	112.00	
<b>Total Barbecue Cost</b>		17.18	859.00	
<b>Lunch Expense</b>				lunch Fees to cover total lunch expenses
Lunch Beverage	50	1.00	50.00	
Lunch Delivery Cost	50	0.50	25.00	
Lunch Food	50	11.25	563.00	
Lunch Service Fee	50	2.56	128.00	
Lunch Contingency		10%	77.00	
<b>Total Lunch Cost</b>		16.86	843.00	
<b>Banquet Expense</b>				registration covers total banquet expense
Banquet Equipment Rental	1	150.00	150.00	

Banquet Food	52	27.00	1,404.00
Banquet Service Fee @ 22%	52	22%	342.00
Banquet Delivery Cost			
Banquet Contingency		10%	-
<b>TOTAL COST OF GOODS SOLD</b>			<u>1,702.00</u>
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>			4,398.00
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES **</b>			
<b>Administrative Supplies</b>	50	4.20	210.00
<b>Advertising</b>	50	3.00	150.00
<b>Communications</b>	50	4.00	200.00
<b>Name Badges</b>	50	4.00	200.00
<b>Paper Goods</b>	50	2.00	100.00
<b>PayPal Fees</b>	50	4.00	200.00
<b>Refreshments</b>	50	5.00	250.00
<b>Keynote Speaker</b>			
<b>Welcome Packets</b>	50	4.00	200.00
		30.20	<u>1,510.00</u>
<b>ORDINARY INCOME</b>			2,888.00
<b>OTHER INCOME/EXPENSE</b>			
Income Distribution MSRAL			<u>1,444.00</u>
<b>NET INCOME</b>			<u><u>1,444.00</u></u>

revised 8/24/2023



## MSRAL BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA - YEAR-END ??????

**DATE: ????? LOCATION????**

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** \_\_\_\_\_AM

II. **WELCOME:**

Thank Convention Chair **????** and club/organization    How many attendees?    How many clubs present?

Recognize any National League Officers, Past AOY Recipients, Observing Program Coordinators, Master Observers, other state & regional visitors and out-of-state clubs.

III. **ROLL CALL:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Arkansas Oklahoma Astronomical Society – AOAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomical Society of Eastern Missouri – ASEM  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomical Society of Kansas City – ASKC  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomical Society of NW Arkansas – ASNWA  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomical Society of Southeastern Missouri – ASSEMO  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomy Associates of Lawrence – AAL  
\_\_\_\_\_ Astronomy Club of Tulsa – ACT  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bartlesville Astronomical Society – BAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ Broken Arrow Sidewalk Astronomer – BASWA  
\_\_\_\_\_ Central Arkansas Astronomical Society – CAAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ Central Missouri Amateur Astronomers – CMAA  
\_\_\_\_\_ Eastern MO Dark Sky Observers – EMDSO  
\_\_\_\_\_ Kansas Astronomical Observers Society – KAO  
\_\_\_\_\_ Northeast Kansas Amateur Astronomers League, Inc. – NEKAAL  
\_\_\_\_\_ Northeast Nebraska Astronomy Club – NENAC  
\_\_\_\_\_ Omaha Astronomical Society – OAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ Platte Valley Astronomical Observers – PVAO  
\_\_\_\_\_ Prairie Astronomy Club – PAC  
\_\_\_\_\_ Springfield Astronomical Society – SAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ St. Louis Astronomical Society – SLAS  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sugar Creek Astronomical Society – SCAS

**IV. GENERAL MEETING:**

1. Treasurer – Minutes – read/review minutes – should be available during meeting.
  - a. Deceased Members List
  - b. Convention Hosting List
2. Treasurer's report – review of financial transactions
3. Elections – Chair 2-year term, Vice-Chair 1 year term, Secretary-Treasurer 1-year term, Regional Representative 3-year term. The secretary keeps track of officer terms of office.
4. Regional Representative Report
5. MSRAL Website Report
6. IDA Donation of \$250.00 Only if it is doable and has Treasurer's okay.
7. Old Business
8. New Business
9. Next Year's Convention Planning Chair Presentation and reminder to pass the MSRAL banner to them
10. Feedback Forms returned to registration desk or to the Regional Representative

**V. CALL TO ADJOURN: \_\_\_\_\_AM**

## IN-COMING CONVENTION CHAIR LETTER SAMPLE (send in April)



Date:

Convention Chair >>>>>> ,

You are scheduled in the MSRAL Convention Business Meeting towards the end to discuss next year's convention with your organization. Please have any information ready to give the attendees a head start in planning their trip for next year.

You are welcome to have a 5-minute power point, handouts, fliers or save the date card. If you need me or the MSRAL Executive Officers for any reason, feel free to contact us at the emails below. We are all looking forward to working with you in the near future and thank you for carrying on this cherished tradition in our region.

Sincerely,

NAME:

MSRAL Chair

Email:

NAME:

MSRAL Vice-Chair

Email:

NAME:

MSRAL Secretary-Treasurer

Email:

NAME:

MSRAL Regional Representative

Email:

## **CONVENTION SCHEDULE**

Considerations for developing a convention schedule are:

Business Meeting is usually about 45 to 60 minutes but check with the Regional Chair since they plan the business meeting agenda and duration.

The refreshment table must be up for the pre-meeting visitation.

Schedule speakers for either 45 – 60 minutes or 30 minutes as deemed necessary.

Ensure breaks after every second speaker for 10 or 15 minutes.

End last speaker before 4:00 to give time for banquet set up and preparation.

Keynote banquet speaker 60 – 90 minutes to include question and answer period.

End last convention speaker about noon.

Arrange for small meeting room and pre-packaged lunch for the AOY Selection Committee Meeting

Fit in door prizes in throughout the schedule

## FEEDBACK FORM

REGISTRATION: Ample notification Y N on-line easy to use Y N onsite registration times convenient  
Y N registration table volunteers helpful and courteous Y N registration packet complete Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COST: registration cost reasonable Y N Friday night meal reasonable Y N Saturday lunch reasonable Y N  
Banquet meal reasonable Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

FACILITIES: speaker space adequate Y N vendor space adequate Y N refreshment visiting area Y N  
time between buildings or room adequate Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

REFRESHMENT TABLE: had good selection Y N table kept stocked and cleaned Y N snack options adequate  
Y N snack options need improvement i.e. healthier Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PROGRAM SCHEDULE & CONVENTION CHAIR OFFICIATION: good selection of speakers Y N program kept on  
schedule Y N talks too long Y N too short Y N breaks well-spaced Y N good audio-visual Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

FOOD: Friday Night: 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well Run 5. Excellent Saturday Lunch: 1. Poor  
2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well Run 5. Excellent Banquet: 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well  
Run 5. Excellent

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DOORPRIZES: good selection of prizes Y N spaced well throughout the weekend Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

VENDORS: had time for vendor visits Y N good selection of vendors Y N need more vendors Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS MEETING: started on time Y N end on time Y N have well planned agenda Y N meeting run  
overall 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well Run 5. Excellent

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PUBLICITY: get ample notice for registration Y N see adds in the Reflector Y N information published in club  
newsletter Y N get emails from club president Y N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

HOSPITALITY/ACCOMMODATIONS: several options available Y N not in price range Y N have discounts Y  
N closely located Y N close to event Y N hotel experience 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well  
Run 5. Excellent

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

BANQUET & KEYNOTE SPEAKER: room set up adequate Y N meal service issues Y N audio visual adequate  
Y N keynote speaker 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well Run 5. Excellent

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Overall Convention Rating: 1. Poor 2. Pretty Good 3. Good 4. Well Run 5. Excellent

Name is Optional \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your input. Return to this to the registration table

## **Special thanks to NCRAL Chairs Carl Wenning and Alan Sheidler for use of their Convention Planning Guide**

Peggy Walker had started a planning guide in 2020 and 2021 but with convention cancellations, it was never finished. At the MSRAL Business Meeting at the Tulsa, OK Convention, it was suggested we needed a planning guide to help future clubs plan. Peggy took on that project and sought the help and expertise of Cook Feldman. When talking to Carl Wenning from NCRAL, he suggested we look at theirs to get a base line and gave us permission to use it in any way we needed to. Once reviewed, it dovetailed into the structure that was already started which gave some great pointers. With survey results included in the key areas of consideration, it aligned with many discussions the MSRAL region had engaged in while planning MSRAL conventions. Due to time, a MSRAL questionnaire was not sent out since the answers seemed to parrot MSRAL concerns. At some point in time, MSRAL may consider sending out their own survey.

### **NCRAL'S QUESTIONNAIRE KEY DATA**

- 1. When to begin promoting the convention:** "How far in advance do you prefer to learn about NCRAL conventions in order to be able to attend?"
  - 9.1% more than a year in advance
  - 30.3% 7 – 12 months in advance
  - 43.9% 4 – 6 months in advance
  - 15.2% 2 – 3 months in advance
  
- 2. Duration: Friday to Sunday morning seem to attract greater potential registrants**
  - 60.6% prefer a Friday/Saturday Convention
  - 34.8% wanted a Saturday/Sunday Convention
  
- 3. Speaker Topics:** "What sort of focus would you prefer to see at a given NCRAL Convention?"
  - 6.1% Hard science
  - 3.0% Astrophotography
  - 7.6% Observing
  - 81.7% Prefer the mix of the above topics.
  
- 4. Mix of talk types:** "Where would you like to see emphasis placed in future NCRAL Conventions?"
  - 10.8% All invited talks (guest speaker) lasting 45 to 60 minutes.
  - 38.5% Mostly invited talks with a few contributed (volunteer) talks (volunteer 15-minute talk)
  - 49.2% An even mix of invited and contributed talks.
  
- 5. Activities for travel companions and children:**
  - 94.4% want to learn about activities for adult travel companions.
  - 27.8% want to know about optional children's activities.
  
- 6. Registration Fee:** "What is the maximum amount you are willing to spend on registration fees – (not to include meals and lodging) to attend a NCRAL Convention?"



39.4% Less than \$100.00  
50.0% \$100.00 to \$200.00  
9.1% \$200.00 to \$300.00

**7. Registration Information:**

67.7% prefer a-la-cart pricing verses a set registration fee that includes everything.

**8. Lodging Costs:** "What is the maximum amount you are willing to spend on lodging to attend a NCRAAL Convention?"

12.3% \$75.00 per night  
38.5% \$100.00 per night  
32.3% \$125.00 per night  
12.3% \$150.00 per night

**9. Meal Costs:** "What is the maximum amount you are willing to spend on lodging to attend a NCRAAL Convention?"

6.4% \$15.00 to \$20.00  
12.7% \$20.00 to \$30.00  
20.6% \$30.00 to \$45.00  
27.0% \$45.00 to \$60.00  
33.3% \$60.00 and above