

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2018
TO: BOG
FROM: SUMMER CONFERENCE TASK FORCE CHAIRS
SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SUMMER CONFERENCE

Background

In October of 2017 NAHRO President, Carl Richie, requested the Fellows and the Member Services Committee create a task force to look into the feasibility of the Summer Conference. He assigned Don Cameron and Andy Rodriguez to head the task force. The Task Force approached the assignment from the following viewpoint: if the conference was eliminated, how would the work of NAHRO get done?

Actions

Conference calls were held over a two-month period from December 2017 through January 2018 to discuss how the non-conference related activities that happen during the Summer Conference would be handled if the conference was eliminated.

- ***Call #1 Committees/BECT***

Standing Committees, subcommittees, task forces, and the BECT all meet face-to-face during the Summer Conference. If the Summer Conference was eliminated, how would they meet? It was determined as long as the committees, subcommittees, task forces and BECT could hold conference calls (preferably video calls), then they could still do the work of NAHRO if the summer conference was eliminated. Motions would be sent to the liaison, and the liaison would send them to the BOG liaison as usual. These would then be presented on a Steering Committee call for approval, or during the next face-to-face meeting of the BOG, whichever came first. It was noted this model might not work for every committee, such as housing or professional development who have more intensive meetings, so additional models may be needed to cover them.

- ***Call #2 Awards***

The Awards of Merit are presented at the Summer Conference and the juries for the Awards of Excellence are held during the conference as well. How would these be covered if the conference was eliminated? It was decided the Awards of Merit could be distributed at the Washington Conference instead of the Summer Conference in either a private reception similar to what is currently held, or preferably at the welcome reception so more people could attend and no additional cost to the conference budget would incur. As for the Awards of Excellence, the juries could do their work through conference calls, similar to how the Awards of Merit regional juries are handled. On a side note, the subcommittee also suggested future Awards of Excellence presentations be moved to an earlier plenary session during the National Conference instead of being held at the closing plenary session, so more people could see them.

- ***Call #3 BOG Meeting***

The BOG is required to meet four times during their two year term according to the NAHRO Constitution. If the meeting at the Summer Conference was eliminated, when could they meet instead? The subcommittee decided the BOG could possibly meet at one of the regional meetings. In order to do this, they would need the region to provide a meeting room and additional sleeping rooms in their room block to cover the BOG members outside of the region.

It was also suggested this would be a bonus to the regions since they could ask BOG members, if willing, to serve on panels or plenary sessions, and it would also give line staff a chance to network with the BOG.

- ***Call #4 Location***

Does the location of an event really matter? After reviewing the conference data provided by NAHRO (attached), the subcommittee discovered that location does matter. Destination cities usually drew higher attendance, but sometimes the cost of those events was higher as well. So while they had more attendees, they didn't always make the most money. In other cities where the attendance was lower, revenue was sometimes comparable to those conferences held in destination cities since costs were lower. The subcommittee determined if the Summer Conference did continue, than location needed to play a greater role in the site selection process to make sure the site would be a draw, but still make a reasonable profit.

- ***Call #5 Tying into the Regional Conferences***

On previous calls it was decided the BOG could hold their required face-to-face meeting at a regional conference if the summer conference was eliminated. However, in order to do this, it was determined the meeting would need to rotate from region to region in order not to place an undue burden on any one region, and the participation in this rotation would be voluntary. The region would need to provide a room for the meeting, add additional room nights to the hotel room block, and be willing to change the date of the meeting from spring to summer in the year the meeting would be held in their region. This would also require better coordination between the regional presidents, the RSOs and national NAHRO in order to avoid scheduling conflicts. As mentioned earlier, this arrangement would be a bonus to the regions since they could ask BOG members, if willing, to serve on panels or plenary sessions, and it would give line staff a chance to network with the BOG. However, while this sounded good in theory, it was decided input from the Regional Presidents and RSOs was needed before this concept could be presented as an option.

- ***Call #6 Regional Presidents and RSO's***

A call was held between the Regional Presidents, the RSO's, the Chairs of the Subcommittee and the President to discuss the possibility of holding the BOG meeting at a regional conference if the Summer Conference was eliminated. Most on the call were receptive to the idea, but were concerned about the timing, additional costs that might be involved, and getting their boards approval. Many felt as long as they had enough advance warning, they could make it happen. It was determined the biggest obstacle would be timing, since the region would have to change its conference dates so their meeting would be in the summer months instead of the spring to allow a reasonable amount of time between the BOG meeting at the Washington Conference and the meeting at the National Conference so they wouldn't be too close together. If this idea moved forward, it was decided more cooperation between the regional presidents, the RSOs and national would be needed in order to coordinate this effort to make sure the conferences didn't overlap.

- ***Call #7 Financial implications***

A call was held with the B&A chair to discuss the possible elimination of the Summer Conference and the financial implications this would have on the organization. Revenue is important to consider since the Summer Conference makes on average \$70,000. The chair said a number of questions needed to be considered such as: Does this revenue include any soft costs such as staff time? If the conference went away would this free staff up to do other things? Can this revenue loss be offset by something else? If we're struggling now to meet budget, then why are we considering getting rid of a revenue stream? Will getting rid of the conference affect other

areas such as the PD revenue made at the conference? The chair felt a strong analysis from B&A was needed before making a final decision on whether to keep or eliminate the summer conference. He said they would conduct the analysis and report back to the subcommittee chairs.

- ***Call #8 Report Out***

A call was held with the entire task force to report the findings of each subcommittee and to notify them about the additional calls to with the Regional Presidents/RSOs and B&A chair. It was decided they would wait until the B&A analysis before making a recommendation to the President and the BOG. It was also suggested that a short survey asking about the conference's value be sent to the membership.

- ***Call #9 Conference Survey Questions***

The task force reviewed the suggested survey questions and offered additional changes. It was determined once the changes were made the survey should be sent to all past conference attendees.

- ***Call #10 Review of the Survey Results***

The task force reviewed the survey results, noting that the conference still has merit, but it may not be viewed as important as the National or Washington conferences. They felt the data reinforced the B&A's findings that the conference should continue, but it needed to be periodically evaluated and a possible revenue generating replacement should be researched.

Results

B&A Analysis

After B&A conducted a financial analysis on the Summer Conference, which looked at the hard and soft costs vs. the average amount of revenue generated (approx. \$50,000), they presented the following Motion to the Summer Conference Task Force:

It is the recommendation of the B & A Committee to continue offering the summer conference and sustain the evaluation process, however has identified specific concerns and believes that several critical components must be addressed prior to a final decision including creating an additional touchpoint or event for members to fill the void; as well as a strategic plan to sustain the organizational structure financially. The Member Services Committee should continue to analyze this issue during each successive term and formulate a recommendation to the Board of Governors.

Conference Survey

A conference survey was also sent to a past conference attendees to ascertain the value of all three conferences. The results are highlights below:

- The content is the main reason people decide to attend followed closely by the cost, PD trainings offered, and the location. But if they had to choose only one conference, then location plays a bigger factor.
- People find value in all three conferences, but if they had to rank them it would be National, then Washington and finally Summer.
- Most agencies/organizations do have travel policies, which are based on budgetary constraints.
- Attendance will probably stay the same for most agencies in the coming years.

- There is a shift away from wanting conferences over the weekend to now wanting them held during the week.
- The most popular cities are Boston, Nashville, NY & DC in the East, Chicago, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Austin in the central part of the country, and Seattle, San Diego, Denver and San Francisco in the west.

Recommendations

- The Member Services Committee should evaluate the Summer Conference at the beginning of every term to make sure it is still viable.
- If it is decided the conference is no longer viable, then contractual obligations need to be honored for any events already scheduled, and the conference would cease after the last contracted event.
- NAHRO staff needs to begin exploring possible revenue alternatives to the Summer conference now instead of waiting for a future decision on the events viability.
- Greater attention needs to be made to future site selections.
- Due to the popularity of the commissioners trainings held during the summer conference, the Professional Development department should consider holding more of these trainings independently from the conference.

Recommendation to the BOG

After reviewing the B&A's motion and the results of the conference survey, the members of the Summer Conference Task Force have put forth the following recommendation to the BOG:

The Summer Task Force supports B&A's motion to continue with the Summer Conference, evaluating it periodically, and they will advise the President of their findings if things change.