

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING A GOLDSCHMIDT CONFERENCE

[NOTE:Please contact Seth Davis (gsoffice@geochemsoc.org) if you are interested in presenting a Goldschmidt Conference bid, or if you have additional questions]

Goldschmidt Conferences are organized annually by conveners selected by the Goldschmidt Forum. The Forum is composed of the President and Vice-President of the Geochemical Society (GS) and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the European Association for Geochemistry (EAG). Traditionally, each conference is organized by a different convener team and held at a different site, which allows local culture and flavor to add atmosphere; however, the Forum may choose to hold the conference at the same place while in Europe or North America. Sites alternate annually between Europe and North America. Deviation from this pattern will be possible in special cases and only by unanimous agreement of the Goldschmidt Forum.

Bids for future conference sites and organizing teams will be solicited each year by advertisements placed in the *Geochemical News* and *Elements*. Prospective teams are encouraged to discuss viability and timing with one or more members of the Goldschmidt Forum and with Seth Davis, Business Manager of the GS, before submitting a bid. Teams that make an acceptable proposal for a future conference will be invited to present their plans at the Board Meeting of GS and EAG during subsequent Goldschmidt meetings. The result of discussion among the board members will form the basis of the decision, but the ultimate choice of site and convener team is made by the Goldschmidt Forum.

The bid proposal should outline information about as many of these topics as possible: the venue with description of facilities and numbers of attendees that can be accommodated; proposed names of organizing team; draft program; proposed mechanism for insuring scientific quality; probable costs and details about registration; abstract fee; accommodation and transport possibilities; and a reasonably detailed budget.

Neither the Geochemical Society (GS) nor the European Association for Geochemistry (EAG) has the resources to cover large conference losses. Seed money will be provided by the EAG to European organizers or from the GS to North American organizers as a loan (roughly \$20k per conference). Where society resources allow, costs for medal winners and transport assistance for young researchers will be offered, but conferences are expected to run at break-even or to make a slight profit. The organizers should develop a balanced budget estimate for a range of participant totals (for example, 500, 1000, 1500, 2000 and 2500). Previous Goldschmidt Conferences have demonstrated that final conference attendance roughly matches the number of abstracts submitted; therefore, organizers should show that major bills will not come due until participation can be estimated or provide a contingency plan against financial loss.

The optimal conference plan will provide a forum for presentation of the geochemical community's newest and best science, over the whole range of sub-fields, with a budget that will keep conference costs low enough to encourage broad, international attendance. The diversity of participants should be fostered. More details on financial aspects appear at the end of this document. Following are hints for practical aspects collected from past Goldschmidt organizers.

- 1) **There needs to be a strong committee behind an offer, but there also must also be at least one or two people within that committee who demonstrate extremely strong motivation.** The Goldschmidt Forum needs to be able to entrust the task to a person and a committee that will get the job done well.
- 2) **There absolutely MUST be a balanced and high quality scientific program,** but construction of a plan for how best to solicit and use the advice of international experts is decided by the organizers. There are many options. One possibility is an International Program Committee (IPC) selected to cover the complete range of geochemical sub-fields. Another is a core Advisory Panel of five or six senior experts, carefully selected for their broad perspectives. Whatever the model chosen, the organizing team must ensure that those chosen for the advisory body are committed to providing input and that the input is objective. The IPC or Advisory Panel should reflect diversity with respect to geography, gender, professional experience, and area of geochemistry.
- 3) **The conference venue should be in an attractive location,** with cultural or natural points of interest for geochemists.
- 4) Based on trends in participation at European and North American conferences over the past 10 years, **a site must be able to assure facilities for a conference of 2000 people with a backup plan for as small a number as 1000,** because it is not possible to predict the whims of our community, the attractiveness of a conference venue, the effects of competing conferences, or sudden global uncertainties.
- 5) **For 2000 people and 10 parallel sessions, one needs 10 rooms that can hold at least 150 to 200 people and enough space for 1000 posters,** for a poster to talk ratio of 1:1. Other ratios require adjustment accordingly. Goldschmidt Conferences traditionally allow only one abstract submission per person. The submitter must pay registration fees.
- 6) **To be comfortable, the location should have additional conference facilities that can support 2000 people,** such as space completely integrated with the session auditoria for an exhibition area, a computer use area, speaker prep rooms, secretariat area, toilets and space for participants to sit or stand and talk.
- 7) **There needs to be a group that has experience collecting fees, booking hotels and organizing the practical details of the conference.** It is risky for each new Goldschmidt organizing team to try to learn these skills. Professional conference organizing (PCO) agencies exist. However, it is essential to know and agree upon beforehand exactly what expenses are covered and what are add-ons and extras. If a percent-of-profit model is chosen for such an agency, requirements to repay loans and grants to the societies must clearly be understood. It is a good idea to get a previous conference convener to take part in the negotiations for the contract. The choice of professional agencies to help with practical details or with the production of the Abstract and Program Volumes is made freely by the convener team. There are advantages to having local agencies, with offices close to or actually in the conference city. In addition, it is strongly advised that the local organizing team work with Cambridge Publishers (Paul Beatty), unless the GS or EAG decide otherwise. In addition, the conference team should

work closely with Seth Davis of the GS who is acting as a clearinghouse for information about the annual meeting, whether it is in Europe or North America.

8) **There needs to be a pool of enthusiastic local students** to help with the preparation and to keep things running smoothly during the conference. Traditionally, students serve as volunteers who are compensated by free access to all conference activities.

9) **Enough low-cost accommodations must exist within a reasonable distance from the meeting site**, including hotel rooms and youth hostels or dorms for students and post docs. The possibility of renting apartments is a definite benefit.

10) **There needs to be a reasonable way for people to find lunch**, without relying on slow, costly or distant restaurants, which can put attendance at afternoon sessions at risk. Lunch included in the conference fee is an option that keeps people on-site, encouraging dialogue. **There should be enough moderately-priced restaurants in the area for evening meals.**

11) **Most preferable is a site accessible by non-stop flights from the major air centers.** The need for extensive or complicated train, bus or car transport from the airport is best avoided. If a less accessible site is otherwise highly favourable, group options for moving large numbers of people in and out – mostly during the same two days – should be considered, e.g., by a special charter arrangement with an airline or a bus company.

12) **Finally, and VERY importantly, the planning should be done very carefully, to ensure that the conference will NOT fail financially. Conference fees must be kept reasonable** to allow geochemists from less-privileged countries and young scientists to attend. Neither the EAG nor GS assumes financial risk for the conference.

- i) The Geochemical Society (GS) and the European Association for Geochemistry (EAG) are recognized as the primary sponsors of Goldschmidt Conferences. Their members receive a substantial discount on registration fees. Other societies may become affiliated sponsors of a Goldschmidt Conference after consultation with the organizers for a specific meeting. Members of affiliated sponsor societies may receive a discounted registration fee, but the discount should be substantially less than that given to GS and EAG members. It is expected that the fee differential for registrants who are not EAG or GS members should be at least the cost of membership in both societies: specifically, the registration form should make it clear that purchasing membership in EAG or GS lowers the conference fee by an amount that makes it likely that each conferee will join one of the two societies. Societies are welcome to continue affiliation for subsequent conferences, but this must be negotiated separately with the organizer for each meeting. An affiliated sponsor is expected to pay a contribution to the conference, to be agreed upon by the organizer and the society.
- ii) GS and EAG have traditionally provided seed money as a loan, to cover such up-front expenses as reserving conference facilities. For those conferences held in North America, the GS will provide \$20,000 U.S. and for meetings in Europe the EAG will provide 20,000 € For meetings elsewhere, the equivalent amount of funds will be

provided, with the proportion between EAG and GS to be negotiated. These funds will be made available in response to a written offer from the conference organizers and a request for funding will be sent by email or letter to the Treasurer of the appropriate society. The funds are normally provided at least a year, but not more than two, in advance of the conference, but if money is available in the treasuries and if a case can be made for an earlier advance, a request can be made. This may be important for conferences held in large cities where booking of facilities may be necessary four or five years in advance.

- iii) It is expected that the seed money (or what is available from the seed) will be returned to the GS or EAG, minus the costs incurred for medal winners.
- iv) In cases where the balance in each society's treasury allows, a separate grant will be allocated, primarily for student support (for example, waiving or reduction of registration fees, or for travel grants or accommodation allowances) and for support of scientists from less-privileged countries. A small proportion of the funds (not more than 10%) may be used to pay expenses of selected invited speakers.
- v) It is intended that Goldschmidt Conferences be planned to break even, but obviously a slight profit is better than a deficit. If the conference makes a profit, the organizers decide what will happen to the residual. In some special cases, the contract with a conference organizing committee might require a certain percentage be paid to them, or a university or research institution that has stood behind the conference and insured against loss might expect a share in the profits. In general, however, it is expected that the organizers will return the profits to the GS or EAG.
- vi) It should be stated clearly in the announcements and on the registration form that there is a no-refund policy on conference expenses in the event of a *force majeure* (for example, natural disaster, disease epidemic, terrorist attack, change in government policy, etc.).
- vii) The organizers of the conference may be required to pay a per capita fee to the GS in order that GS business office personnel can help with conference organization. This will ordinarily be negotiated early in the process of establishing a budget for the conference.