GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING THE
ALAIR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Introduction

Without question, the person (or persons) most responsible for the success of the ALAIR Annual Conference is the Local Host (and his or her support staff, where applicable). The following guidelines are an attempt to assist Local Hosts in making the necessary arrangements for a successful conference, and to identify for potential host institutions the general types of services that have been required in the past.

It must be pointed out that the Program Chair in concert with the Local Host determines the exact nature of any specific conference. The following items should not be considered as absolute requirements, nor should they be considered inclusive of all possible needs. The ALAIR leadership and the Program Chair will identify the services required and coordinate them with the Local Host. It is up to the Local Host to evaluate these requirements in relation to their feasibility and to communicate to the Program Chair any necessary alterations in these plans.

Throughout these guidelines the Local Host is referred to as singular. However, at some institutions more of a team approach is employed, if appropriate personnel are available. The lack of staff should not deter potential hosts, however. Successful conferences have been organized as one-person operation, a team process, and everything in between.

Special Note: The ALAIR Annual conference has always been a moneymaking event, rather than a drain on the organization's finances. Therefore, efforts should be made to keep costs at the low end of the scale, within reason. Any extraordinary or questionable expenses should be presented to the ALAIR leadership prior to incurring any obligations. In most cases, the Program Chair will have wide latitude to evaluate such matters, with only the most exceptional requiring action of the larger group.

Responsibilities of the Local Host

Facilities

Secure and schedule meeting rooms for the Conference sessions. Whenever possible, these spaces should be obtained for little or no charge. The precise needs will be specified by the Program chair, but a typical set of criteria would be:

•One large room configured as an auditorium, capable of seating approximately 100 persons. A lectern or comparable feature should be provided, as well as voice amplification equipment.

•Two or three rooms for breakout sessions, capable of seating 25-50 persons. (A medium to large classroom will usually serve this purpose). Each room should be provided with an overhead projector and appropriate projection surface, unless otherwise specified by the Program chair.

•Another room may be required for multiple concurrent informal presentations. It should be supplied with several tables for presenters to set up their materials, and should be large enough for 50-60 persons to maneuver from table to table. This can be a lobby or similar area, if traffic patterns do not prohibit it, or it can be a large classroom that has been cleared of most furnishings.

•Depending upon the needs of presenters, the host may be requested to locate additional types of equipment as the program planning takes shape.

•A table and chairs should be provided in a lobby or other common area for registration and handing out of conference materials as the participants arrive. This setup will be required during the morning hours.

•A facility capable of hosting the luncheon and business meeting. This should provide seating for approximately 80-100 people, including a head table to seat the ALAIR officers and special guests (approximately 10-12), with voice amplification equipment for announcements and the business meeting.

Assure that needed facilities support personnel are available to handle unexpected problems (seating, heating/cooling, audio-visual, etc.) that always occur. Obviously, such support will be required if the conference schedule involves multiple setups for a single room.

Adequate parking should be provided for the participants, as convenient to the meeting location as feasible. Special difficulties or arrangements should be discussed with the Program Chair as early as possible in the planning process.

Food

Make arrangements for the luncheon, which may be served either buffet or seated. Sample menus and estimated costs should be provided to the Program Chair at an early date. Every effort should be made to keep costs reasonable and to maintain flexibility in the number of meals to be provided. (The estimated number of meals will change as registrations are processed, with the ultimate goal of having to pay for no more than 5-10 unused portions.)

Arrange for break food items. The Program Chair will determine the types and frequency of service to be provided, but they will usually involve:

•Registration refreshments prior to the opening session. Can vary but usually something on the order of coffee and/or juice and pastries. Suggestions for reasonable variations usually are welcome.

•Possibly coffee and/or soft drinks during breaks between sessions throughout the morning. If feasible, this can be a continuation of the registration service. Depending upon the schedule, an afternoon break might be desired.

Registration Materials

Obtain a basic packet of materials to be handed out to participants when they arrive. This will usually take the form of a folder, bag or other item to hold the materials. Beyond that, it is a nice touch if one or two other items can be provided, such as information flyers about the host campus, a pad, pencil, discount coupon, or other item provided by a local merchant. Local Hosts are urged to be creative, since this is a good chance to publicize your institution.

The Local Host should see that the appropriate number of sets of registration materials (usually around 80) are obtained and assembled prior to the first day of the conference. Additional materials (program, financial statement, membership list, evaluation forms, etc.) will be provided by the ALAIR leadership closer to the beginning of the conference, and these will have to be added to the packets (or handed out separately, if time does not permit).

Nametags for participants should be obtained and prepared. (The Treasurer will make arrangements to provide a preliminary attendance list for this purpose at the appropriate time.) Nametags need not be elaborate, but should be appropriate for the purpose. A supply of blank tags and a means to fill them in should be available for on-site registrations.

If personnel resources of the Local Host permit, it is helpful if at least one person can be available to assist at the registration table.

The Local Host will be asked to provide the Program Chair with advance information about locations, parking arrangements, maps and other items needed for the registration mail out. This usually occurs approximately six weeks prior to the conference.

Billing

Vendor charges usually are billed to the Local Host, in order to minimize confusion and encourage appropriate service by the providers. As soon as bills are received, and unless there is some question, they should be forwarded to the Program Chair, who will review them and forward to the Treasurer for prompt payment or reimbursement, as appropriate. The Local Host provides a valuable service to the ALAIR membership in this area, by assuring that local control is enforced over vendors.

Pre-Conference Activities

The Program Chair will determine precisely what, if any, activities are scheduled on the day prior to the Annual Conference. These may take the form of workshops, meetings or social activities. Additional requirements of the Local Host might include:

•Arrange with a local hotel or motel to provide a block of rooms at conference rates for the night before the conference. A restaurant/lounge in the hotel is preferable, but not vital, especially if a substantial difference in cost or distance is involved. (Even if pre-conference activities are not scheduled, it is helpful if the Local Host can provide names and locations of convenient hotels/motels for those individuals whose locations require that they arrive the preceding night.

•Arrange with hotel/motel to provide a table in the lobby or other convenient location for early registration.

•Arrange with hotel/motel or other location to host a social hour. (This can also serve as the location for early registration.)

•Identify a restaurant to host a group dinner for early arrivals. It should be relatively convenient to the hotel, nice, but not too expensive, and provide a reasonable variety of menu choices in order to accommodate a diverse group. A separate dining room is desirable, but not vital. Due to reimbursement requirements, the restaurant must be willing to provide separate checks.

•If pre-conference workshops or meetings are scheduled, the Local Host should make arrangements to identify and schedule appropriate facilities for these purposes. Precise requirements will be provided by the Program Chair, but they typically will be similar to those for breakout sessions during the conference.

General Requirements

The most important service provided by the Local Host is to be the eyes and ears of the ALAIR leadership at the site of the conference. It is vital that the Local Host stay in regular contact with the Program Chair, keeping that individual informed of progress and, particularly, emerging problems that will have to be addressed. The sooner a problem can be identified, the more readily it can be accommodated. Despite the efforts of everyone involved, some problems are unavoidable, and the Local Host is the individual best situated to minimize the disruption.