



## Conference Site Selection FAQ's

### How does ABSA choose a conference site?

ABSA rotates sites across the country in a three year rotation: East, Midwest, and West. Requirements are sent by the ABSA Office five years in advance to a number of cities in the specific areas as well as hotel representatives.

We have specific minima for conference space, exhibitor space, and pre-conference course space. We need at least 15,000 ft<sup>2</sup> for the main meeting space, 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> for the exhibitors, and 12,000 ft<sup>2</sup> or 8 rooms for the pre-conference courses. These requirements are the major issue; only a few hotels have adequate space and most conference centers have far more space than we need and require we guarantee more hotel rooms and meeting space than we can fill.

The ABSA Office receives responses from Visitors Bureaus or hotels in specific cities. These options are brought to Council at the October Council meeting. Council examines the data and determines the best city to perform a site visit (in conjunction with the Mid-term Council meeting). In the past, there were 2-4 hotels/city to choose from. Now, with the growing size of the association, it is frequently only one.

### So, when you go to a city, what are the criteria for the winning hotel?

Council balances a number of criteria in selecting the facility, including:

- Overall cost –A variety of costs including room rates (both general meeting rates and government rates), rental fees, food & beverage, local labor costs, and more. Renting a convention center is frequently more expensive than hotel space, for both the space itself and transportation between the host hotel and the convention center.
- Accessible location - The location needs to be accessible for national and international attendees and the cost of getting to and from the airport is considered.
- Functional meeting space - We not only need to make sure that we have enough space for our meetings, but we need to make sure that the proximity and flow of the space is ideal for members.
- Quality of venue - We look for a facility that is up to member standards physically and has a culture of quality service that will be a good partner in helping to make the members experience is a positive one.
- Availability of activities - We look for facilities that are close to areas where members can dine, entertain, and experience local attractions.
- Fits in with ABSA culture - A very important aspect of the ABSA conference is networking. We look for a venue where it is easy for members to connect and meet. To do this we try to avoid multiple hotels or having events in different locations.

### Could we hold conferences at a university and save on cost?

Holding the annual conference at a university conference center would mean that the conference would have to be held during the summer when the universities are on summer break. There is often considerable distance between housing and the meeting space (which itself could be in multiple buildings). A number of the large universities are not near major airports. Transportation

to and from the airport and the possible need for on campus transportation could be expensive; there would be trade-offs.

**Why do we have to pay for internet connections in our rooms?**

ABSA has been trying to negotiate this for several years. Going forward, our conference hotels will offer free internet in the hotel guest rooms.

**Why can't we get free internet in the conference rooms?**

In most cases, the internet in the meeting space is provided and managed by a third party vendor and is not negotiable by the hotel. The third party provider has expenses to install the high speed internet for hundreds of people in which they charge for to cover their expenses; typical charges are between \$200 and \$400 a day for a single internet connection. This makes it cost prohibitive for ABSA to offer access to conference attendees. ABSA will continue to look for ways to offer internet access in the meeting space.