UURMAPA Pod Hosting 2023

We love that so many people have been able to gather virtually at past conferences, but some still miss the personal face-to-face connections that meant so much pre-pandemic. If you are among those, you are invited to the Wilmington, Delaware, pod. Pod participants make their own arrangements to stay (or commute) and eat in a variety of settings near the church, which will host conference programming segments shared on a large screen. Some joint meals will be arranged. Contact Richard Speck treasurer@uurmapa.org for more information or to join the pod.

Some UURMaPAns are creating their own informal gatherings, getting together in small local groups at someone's home or a nearby church. Your planning committee encourages such gatherings. Remember that each person should have an individual device and a space to use it if you are going to participate in on-line small groups. If you are going to do your own on-site groups, please touch base with our small group coordinator Sonya Sukalski, sonya.sukalski@comcast.net.

GENERAL POD INFO & SUGGESTIONS:

Concept

A Pod is a central location where UURMAPA members may gather to participate in our virtual conference. The Pod may utilize a church with appropriate AV technology to allow group participation for major presentations like the keynote and also have the capacity for small group breakouts. Alternately, a Pod may use a conference center that has the capability of hosting this type of gathering. Whichever is used, it must be fully accessible for our members.

Team Leadership

Each Pod should have a team of individuals to share the organization of the Pod. At least two people will be responsible for the various needs to put together a successful Pod. Three to four would be ideal so that all aspects are covered. One person should be technically sophisticated to address any issues that may come up during the conference.

Sleeping Accommodations

A Pod using a church needs to think about where travelers might find sleeping arrangements. The location should be near a variety of hotels or motels with different price ranges. Some Pods may offer a list of alternative accommodations such as Airbnb or bed and breakfast locations nearby. If using a conference center, then make sure it has accessible rooms.

Meals

A Pod will provide food during the conference. They may provide catered meals on premises where people share the cost or provide a list of local restaurants near the church where people can choose to eat with different price ranges. Coffee and tea should be available throughout the conference as well as water. A Pod using a conference center will have the meal service provided as part of the cost of the center. Healthy snacks should also be made available such as fruit or energy bars. A system of reimbursing for any alcohol beverages provided will allow those who want to partake to do so without burdening the cost of the Pod unnecessarily.

Transportation

Some people may use public transit like airplanes, buses, and trains to travel to the Pod location. The Pod organizers need to identify which modes of travel are easiest to get to the Pod.

If possible, pick up and drop off for those using public conveyances should be offered. Also, helping people travel from hotels to the church daily should be considered. An alternative is using Lyft or Uber services if they are available.

Technology

Since this will be a hybrid online and in person event, the host site needs to have the capability for adequate interactions with those online and in the room. Wi-Fi for laptops and a strong internet connection for the video projector are a must. A person familiar with the host technology is required should technical issues arise. Also, sound amplification will be needed for interactions between Pods and others online. This might mean a microphone for speakers who are interacting with a keynote or other presentation. There is also the possible need for assisted hearing devices for individuals.

Breakout Space

There are times for small group sessions as part of the conference. Separate locations where smaller groups of Pod participants will be needed. These spaces should also have Wi-Fi capability. Comfortable seating will allow for a pleasant experience. Depending on the size of the Pod, two to four locations may be needed to keep the breakouts to no more than 6 individuals.

Costs

Each Pod needs to be self-sufficient financially. Individuals may apply for scholarships to reduce the cost of registration. Each Pod needs to develop a budget of what they think they will spend for food. The Pod location may request reimbursement for the use of the space and or supplies for meals. People who are organizers of the Pod should not bear the total cost of the Pod. A possible solution is to ask everyone attending a Pod to contribute the same amount to cover shared meals and drinks excepting alcohol. A Pod at a retreat center may apply for an advance to cover the cost of making a reservation. The advance will be paid back through registrations at that site.

Publicity

Each Pod will coordinate with the Planning Committee to publicize each Pod location so that people may make choices of where to travel. Each Pod should highlight the local attractions that might entice others to come to that Pod location. One member of the Pod team should be designated as the contact person to answer questions and create a list of attendees.

Health Concerns

Given that the state of the Covid Pandemic continues to affect the population, the Pod organizers need to follow the national and local protocols concerning precautions on in-person meetings and social distancing and mask wearing. Organizers and attendees also need to follow the protocols and mandates of the specific location where the POD will be gathering. The current conditions should be communicated to any who might be attending so that they can make their own health risk assessment.

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