CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Evaluation is the process of critically observing, measuring and monitoring the performance of a conference in order to assess its outcomes accurately. Evaluation enables feedback to the conference 'key' organisers and is a tool to analyse and improve the performance for future conferences.

Lessons learned from one conference can be incorporated in the planning for the next.

It is best to establish the method of evaluation in the planning stages, the following items will be a guide:

• What data will be required
• Who will be gathering the information, how and when
• What methods of analysis will be used
• What format will the final report be presented in and to whom.

Listed below are a variety of methods to gather the results for the evaluation.

• Data collection
• Observation
• Feedback from organisational meetings
• Questionnaires and surveys

There are three main opportunities to evaluate

Pre-conference

A feasibility study into the viability of the conference can establish a benchmark against which success can be assessed

• What level of resources will be required for the conference to proceed?

Market research is a tool to establish:

• the probable audience reaction
• prediction of attendance figures
• prediction of costs
• prediction of benefits

Review a similar conference in the past - compare outcomes

Monitoring the conference

Tracking the progress of a conference throughout implementation stage enables the organisers to take action immediately where required, for example:

• If registrations are slow additional promotion of the conference may be required by creating a higher profile for the conference within the media
• More $'s spent on promotion, in which part of the budget can the funds be adjusted
• Media coverage - is the program being effective
• Continuous monitoring of the budget
Post conference evaluation

After the conference has been completed data which has been accumulated during the planning and implementation of the conference is analysed.

Data may be accumulated from the following:

- Budget - predicted and actual
- Registration schedule
- Promotion schedule
- Statistics of attendees
- Evaluation forms