A Guide for Konferenco Content Committee

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Original document: A Guide for HotNets General Chairs

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Congratulations on selecting content and designing the schedule for a Monero Konferenco! Hosting can be a really rewarding experience. This document is intended to help make the process as easy for you as possible.

*I make no guarantees that any of the information in this document is up-to-date or complete. If you notice that any of the information is out of date, please update this document, and consider this a living thing.*

# What does the Konferenco Content Committee do?

These individuals decide on content and schedule for the Konferenco, act as masters of ceremony for the event, and coordinate the publication of papers (if relevant). Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

* Nominate, invite, and confirm invited speakers (collecting abstracts), panelists, and panel moderators.
* Define submission requirements for online proposals.
* Collect and judge submissions for inclusion.
* Set the schedule of sessions and panels.
* Sending up-to-date speaker, panelist, and sponsor information to you for posting on the website.
* Act as masters of ceremony (introductory remarks, introducing speakers, introducing panels, possibly acting as panel moderators).
* If proceedings are to be published, coordinate the collection of printer-ready papers, permission forms, and write frontmatter of proceedings.

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# KNOW WITH WHOM YOU ARE WORKING

As the steering committee, you make most of the biggest decisions of how money is spent.

One of you is likely to be the individual (or individuals, or a representative of the entity) upon whom tax liability for this event ultimately falls.

Your right-hand-person is the Konferenco Organizer and their program manager, who work together to act as a bridge between you, the content committee, and all other groups that make a Konferenco run, like the venue/rental/catering/hotel representatives, A/V, web developers, and of course speakers, sponsors, panelists, moderators, and other Konferenco personnel.

Here’s what some of these are broadly responsible for.

* **Konferenco Organizer (KO):** The Konferenco Organizer may be the program manager and not know it. The KO is responsible for, among other things, the following:
  + Budget design and reporting
  + Venue
  + Audio/visual (A/V) recording or streaming
  + Catering
  + Online registration
  + Website
  + Assisting the SC with handling sponsorships
  + Travel and accommodations for speakers
  + Welcome bag sourcing, order, and assembly
  + More.
  + More than that.
  + No, even more.
  + All the little things that make a Konferenco work but are easy to take for granted (badges, posters, power, wifi, …).
  + Speaker dinner
  + Handling money: getting money in, getting invoices out.
* **Program manager (PM):** The Konferenco Organizer may be the program manager and not know it. The Konferenco Organizer will probably seek approval from the SC to hire an independent program manager. We recommend event organizers with experience in organizing academic conferences or organizing engineering, medicine, science, or technology conferences outside of academia. The program manager is responsible for, among other things:
  + Obtaining cost estimates from vendors and venues.
  + Reviewing and negotiating contracts, insurance policies, etc.
  + Day-to-day operations
  + Handling travel and accommodations for speakers, panelists, etc.
  + Assisting the KO with welcome bag assembly and event day registration
  + Assists the Konferenco Organizer with everything Konferenco-related, ranging from spreadsheets to budgets to ordering, handling, and assembling welcome bags.
* **Speakers and panelists:** These folks show up and give talks.

# SELECT A CZAR.

Have one or more meeting. Select an individual who will act as the contact point for invited speakers (the “invitation czar”).

# NAIL DOWN DATES & HEADCOUNT

Have one or more meeting. Select an individual who will act as the contact point for invited speakers (the “invitation czar”). Select a target number of speakers and panelists based on the performance of last years’ Konferenco, and how many of these will be invited instead of submitted.

* **What to look for:**
  + The KO will communicate the dates of the event, the total allowable headcount, and the date of registration to you from the SC.
* **What you need to do:** 
  + Decide on dates:
    - Dates that CFP opens on the website (“CFP date”).
    - Dates that first round of invitations will be sent to speakers (“invitation date”).
    - Deadlines for open submissions (“submission deadline”).
    - Date that Czar sends first round of speaker acceptance/rejection letters (“A/R date”).
    - Dates for each round of acceptance/rejection letters indicating when RSVPs are required or the speaker is assumed to have forfeited (“RSVP date”).
    - A meeting for around 2 weeks before the Konferenco.
  + Decide on headcount:
    - How many speakers in total?
    - How many speakers will be invited (as opposed to submitting an abstract)?
    - How many panels, how many panelists on each, and how many moderators?
  + Send the dates and headcount to the KO.
* **What you should do:**
  + Start reaching out to possible speakers to take their temperature on attending and speaking. Keep in mind folks who are keen on the idea.
* **What you should not do:** send out formal invitations yet.

# DESIGN SAMPLE SCHEDULE AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS.

See the bottom of this document for the sample schedule we began with (and note that one such schedule is required for each room!).

* Picking session titles too early can be beneficial (it shows speakers where they may fit into the conference, so unrelated abstracts are not submitted).
* It can also be a drawback (it shoehorns speakers unfairly).

The first Konferenco had no submission requirements except an abstract.

# COMPILE LISTS OF SPEAKERS TO INVITE

Compile some ranked lists of speakers and panelists at least a week before the invitation date. Split these up into rounds for invitations. Aim for a quarter to half of speaking slots to be filled by invited speakers.

**Stuff to keep in mind:**

* Finding good invited speakers may be a long process. Make sure your process is flexible enough to include good invited speakers late in the process.
* Inviting someone last-minute to speak is usually a “no” for obvious reasons.
* Panelists should be given an opportunity to speak for a short speaking slot.
* Highly sought-after speakers have many engagements and should be invited early.
* Certainly if you invite boring-to-listen-to speakers or speakers with boring content early on, they’ll snatch up the chance, but then you’ll only have boring content.
* However, if many top tier speakers are already engaged and your first round of invitations only include them, then you have wasted time asking top-tier speakers who are already busy and you will get a lot of “No” and you have to send out a new round of invitations… which may have the same problem...
* There is a balancing act here. I don’t pretend to know the game-theoretic solution.

# GET LAST YEAR INVITATION EMAILS, DRAFT THIS YEARS’.

At least two weeks before the invitation date, get old sample emails and draft this years’ emails.

* Each invitation letter should have an RSVP deadline for the speaker.
* This RSVP deadline will depend on whether the speaker was invited by the CC without a submitted abstract, or whether the speaker is going through the submission process.
  + Speakers should be given at least a month to respond before they forfeit their spot.
  + Invited speakers should be given at least two months to respond… but these speakers should have an interactive/live conversation with the invitation czar, so the deadline for these speakers should not be an issue.
* Each invitation should request to use the speaker’s likeness on the website, and request that we record and/or stream the presentation. Acceptance of the speaking engagement is implicit agreement to these terms, unless otherwise specified.
* Each invitation e-mail should request information from the speaker like a photo, a one-two sentence blurb about themselves, and any *dietary restrictions necessary to take into account for the speaker dinner.*
* In 2019, we did not have a formal invitation letter, but you can see a sample at the end of this document.
* In 2020, please draft an email template inviting speakers to speak at the Konferenco to include in this document.
* In 2021 and beyond, use these templates and append your year’s templates to the end of this file for future committees.

# SEND OUT (THE NEXT) ROUND OF INVITATIONS

The Czar will, beginning on the invitation date, do the following in iterated rounds:

* send out the drafted invitation emails to the first (or next) round of invited speakers, and
* follow up with all invitees from previous rounds who have not responded yet, and
* place speaker information as they accept invitations into a big file to dump on the KO when they ask for it, and
* place speaker information as they reject or ignore invitations into a separate file for future years, or for emergency backup speakers, etc.

The Czar will iterate to the next round of speaker invitations no more rapidly than once a week. If the quota is filled, the Czar should informally invite the remaining individuals on the list to submit proposals/abstracts (as well as any speakers on the list who declined an invitation… their travel situations may have changed).

In each round, the Czar should respect the RSVP deadline of the speaker and assume they are rejecting their invitation of the RSVP deadline has passed.

# COMPILE FIRST DRAFT SCHEDULE

Once a sufficient number of invited speakers have agreed to attend, the CC can populate their names into the schedule, keeping in mind this won’t reflect their actual speaking slots until much later.

Send this to the KO, along with speaker contact information and any dietary restrictions from the speakers.

# REVIEW SUBMITTED TALKS.

Once the submission deadline has passed (or, if the number of submissions is large, perhaps do this in stages leading up to the submission deadline), call a meeting and select which of the submitted abstracts are invited to speak. Split invitations up into rounds again, with RSVPs, and send them out just like Step 6.

**Some things to keep in mind:**

* Continue keeping a backup list of speakers available for the KO in case a last-minute cancellation could be rectified by a convenient replacement.
* The Konferenco is a scholarly, technical, and multidisciplinary conference being hosted by builders of technology.
  + We do not strictly define this as a scientific conference because not all presentations need to be scientific.
  + We do not strictly define this as a research conference because not all presentations need to be unique and novel research.
  + At the first Konferenco, we had speakers on topics like government regulation and lobbying efforts, the importance of private e-cash in society, the (mis)use of privacy technology and the impact upon different demographics.
  + Hardware presentations, especially that use live examples, are particularly welcome at Konferenco.
  + In future Konferencos, we would like to have sessions on micro and macroeconomics in cryptocurrency-adjacent industries, more sessions on hardware, sessions on environmental sustainability in cryptocurrencies, and more.
* Contributors to the overall Monero economy, infrastructure, and ecosystem, are welcome to share their practical experiences.

**Some things to avoid:**

* Promotional presentations about ICO shitcoins are not welcome.
* Avoid TED-style inspiration talks.
* Avoid low-information-density talks.
* Avoid selecting bad communicators as speakers. Some conferences require a video submission of the talk, for example, to guarantee that speakers have practiced their talk at least once. We don’t recommend this unless it becomes systemically problematic.

# SEND OUT (NEXT) ROUND OF ACCEPTANCE LETTERS.

All of the following should begin before the A/R date and should be completed by the A/R date.

**What to do:**

* Once the CC has ranked and split submissions up into rounds, the Czar sends out the first round of acceptance/rejection letters before the A/R date.
* Upon hearing back from speakers, the Czar adds speakers to the schedule.
* Once RSVP dates have elapsed, the Czar moves to the next round and repeats.

# GET ABSTRACTS, FINISH DRAFT SCHEDULE.

At least one month before the Konferenco, ensure that all invited speakers have sent the CC their abstracts. Once the quota is met, call a meeting to decide on the final schedule. This includes session titles.

**Be sure to do this:** Confirm with all speakers before finishing off the draft schedule.

**What to look for**: The KO will contact you for speaker and schedule information for the website. It’s okay to send partial information; they will be updating the website organically as you finish negotiating with speakers and send them schedule information.

**Things to look out for:**

* Every session needs a master-or-mistress-of-ceremony (“emcee”) from the Content Committee or chosen by the CC.
* Lunch breaks should be at least an hour, preferably 90 minutes or 2 hours. If the venue has a restaurant on premises or if there is catering, an hour is possibly okay, but try to maintain 90 minute or longer lunches.
* Each session should be 2-4 speakers with 20-30 minutes each (unless the CC decides differently).
  + Talks longer than a typical college lecture (40-50 minutes) are discouraged; attendees get bored.
  + Talks shorter than 20 minutes are generally not worth it.
  + Assume 5-7 minutes for Q&A and 2-5 minutes for setting up between speakers.
* Top talks should be at the top of the day… but this isn’t a rule we followed very well, some of the best talks were at the very end of the first Konferenco. Why? Travel restrictions!
* Travel times for speakers are critical; you cannot schedule someone to speak if they have already left for the airport.
* Traveling to the east is harder for jet lag than traveling to west.
  + If a speaker is coming from east of the Konferenco, then they are traveling west, and they are likely to be good choices for early-morning talks.
  + If a speaker is coming from west of the Konferenco, they will probably prefer a later talk.
  + Travelers from farther away need more time to recover from jet lag.

**What to do:**

* Send the KO the list of speakers and their contact information.
* Send the KO the schedule draft, including session titles.

# SEND OUT THE REGISTRATION INFORMATION.

Sometimes the CC will have to meet once or more in the weeks leading up to the event (for example if the details for some conference-call-style panel requires extra discussion, or if speakers have to cancel). Don’t be afraid to meet again.

Sometimes speakers cancel last-minute for personal reasons like deaths in the family or illness, and so on. It’s not personal.

You have a backup list of speakers in case this happens. If speakers can’t be replaced, sessions can be made shorter and coffee breaks can be extended.

**What to do:**

* At least three weeks before the event, the invitation czar should contact each speaker and confirm with them (or should have before drafting the schedule)
* The KO will send you special links for speaker registration or special speaker codes for free registration. **Send these out to every speaker!**
* At least two weeks before the event, reach out to all speakers who have not registered and kindly remind them to use their registration code/link as soon as possible.

# FINALIZE SCHEDULE.

**What to look out for:** At least a week before the event, the KO will reach out to you to obtain the final version of the schedule for printing on programs and updating the website.

**What to do:** Provide final confirmation of the schedule to the KO, who will post it online.

**What happens next:**

* The KO will respond with a “run-of-show,” a minute-by-minute break-down of the day’s events.
* Approve this run-of-show or ask for modifications until you approve it.

From here on out, the CC and the KO will use the run-of-show instead of the schedule. Any last minute cancellations go on here.

# CHECKLISTS.

Here are some handy checklists; these should be edited and amended in future versions of this document, possibly with timelines attached.

* **Before the submission deadline:**
  + Select czar
  + Decide on number of speakers, panels, and panelists-per-panel.
  + Decide on dates.
  + Design sample schedule and submission requirements.
  + Compile lists of invited speakers split into invitation rounds
  + Draft invitation emails
  + Czar sends rounds of invitations.
  + Compile first draft schedule and send to KO.
* **After the submission deadline and before the A/R date.**
  + Review submitted abstracts and split into invitation rounds.
  + Czar sends rounds of invitations.
  + Update drafted schedule and send to KO.
* **30 days before**
  + Collect abstracts from all speakers and panel summaries from all moderators.
  + Update drafted schedule and send to KO.
  + Send speaker contact info to the KO and any other information (like photo, blurb, or food restrictions).
  + Send out registration links/codes to speakers and panelists.
* **Week before**
  + Finalize schedule for KO to print on programs
  + Receive run-of-show from KO for last-minute modifications.
* **Day of the event**
  + Use run-of-show to emcee the event.
  + Make any last-minute content decisions
* **Day after the event**
  + Send thank-you e-mails to all speakers, panelists, and moderators.
  + Update this document :)

# SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Day -1

Hosted dinner with speakers the night before the conference.

Day 0

08:30 – 09:00 - Same-day registration and breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 - Session 1

10:30 – 10:45 - Coffee break

10:45 – 12:15 – Session 2

12:15 – 13:45 – Lunch break

13:45 – 15:00 – Session 3

15:00 – 15:15 – Coffee break

15:15 – 16:45 – Session 4

Day 1

08:30 – 09:00 – Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 – Session 5

10:30 – 10:45 – Coffee break

10:45 – 12:15 – Session 6

12:15 - 13:45 - Post-conference lunch?