Negotiating Tips for Off Campus Venues

This is a quick checklist to assist in negotiating the best overall package when selecting an off campus venue for conferences, workshops or other York event. This is not a comprehensive “how to” guide, rather, its purpose is to alert event planners to points that should be discussed prior to making a commitment to an outside party (such as a hotel or other conference facility).

One important concept to remember at all times is that the venue will contribute to a positive event outcome. Location, services and overall venue performance will impact on the experience of the event participants and the reputation of the University. As such, price is only one of the factors in selecting the venue. This should be considered with all other aspects of the venue while keeping balance and reasonability top of mind.

Note:

York University belongs to the Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) which, through its National Procurement Committee, negotiates contracts with selected suppliers. One of these contracts is for preferred hotel rates across Canada. Event planners are encouraged to visit the site below prior to selecting a venue to determine if additional discounts are offered to York University through the CAUBO contract.

http://www.caubo.ca/pr/pr_docs/agreement_docs/Canadian%20University%20Hotel%20Rate%20Program%202.xls

Planning Stage

☐ Venues may offer better deals if organizers are willing to be flexible with dates (e.g. dates falling in high-season or low season; if there a particularly slow period where the venue is looking for business, etc.)

☐ Prior to selecting an off campus venue, ensure that all needs have been taken into account (separate those that are a ‘must’ versus those that would be ‘nice to have’). This will help determine what cannot be negotiated out of a possible contract

☐ Have a good sense of what was paid in the past for a similar event or conference for benchmarking purposes

☐ Keep market and economic conditions in mind when planning an event. Competition among venues is not uncommon, particularly if there a number of venues in close proximity to one another

☐ Plan for a site tour prior to booking

Negotiation Stage

If applicable and/or appropriate under the circumstances, stress the importance of the group’s presence at the venue and highlight any public relations/reputational benefit this exposure will bring to the venue and use this as a possible cost reduction strategy.

Answers to questions that may impact the total value of the package include:

Procurement Services, York University
April, 2010
**Guest rooms and rates**

- Are guest rooms required? How many? Is there a discounted room rate for bulk reservations? Is there a cancellation fee?
- Is breakfast included in the room rate? This should not be included if breakfast is provided as part of the event.
- Can the check-out time be extended? At no additional cost?
- Is access to internet required? Can this be provided at no charge?

**Transportation services**

- Will parking be required? Can this be provided at a reduced rate or no charge?
- Will participants be travelling long distances requiring airport transportation? Does the venue provide access to/from the airport at no charge?

**Conference Facilities**

- Will audio/visual equipment, easel-board, projector etc., be required? For how many rooms? Is there a flat rate per piece of equipment or can a flat rate be negotiated? Will on-site technical support be provided? At what cost?
- Are there other event facility needs that are required, e.g., photocopier, fax, and telephone facilities? Will there be a charge for these services?

**Food and Beverage Options**

- Is there a minimum food and beverage guarantee? What does this include? How is alcohol managed? Should a bar service be provided? What additional costs are included for the food and/or beverage service?
- How will special dietary needs be handled? Is there an additional charge?

**Payment Options**

Billing should be negotiated to take place AFTER the event and via original invoice addressed to York University.

In some cases, venues may require a deposit. This should be kept to a minimal amount and must be approved by the University Comptroller in advance of making a final commitment.

Off campus venues may require credit information prior to formalizing an agreement. This is available at: [http://www.yorku.ca/procurement/external/creditrequest.html](http://www.yorku.ca/procurement/external/creditrequest.html).

**Final Contract Stage**

Typically, venues will require signing a contract that is provided by the venue. Contract details must be reviewed closely to ensure accuracy.
Liability clauses (insurance and damage)

☐ Is there protection for loss or stolen property?
☐ Will additional insurance be required to cover damage to property?
☐ Is there an appropriate indemnification clause? Force majeure clause?

If unfamiliar with off campus venue contracts, Procurement Services can assist with contract reviews as additional information and/or contractual clauses may be required to ensure risk to the University is minimized.

Overall Negotiation Tips

1. Successful negotiations are about win-win outcomes for all parties in the negotiation;

2. Establish a good business relationship as the venue may be used again in future by other University departments;

3. Act honestly and ethically and consistent with York University’s Procurement Code of Ethics;

4. Be patient, talk less and listen more; start with a good foundation of knowledge and focus the conversation on getting the right information from which to make the best decision;

5. Occasionally summarize what has been discussed and/or agreed to so as to ensure a common understanding or prevent misunderstandings; this also helps to bring closure to agreed-upon items and focus on those that remain outstanding or contentious.

Contact Information

Procurement Services
416-736-5143
purchase@yorku.ca
http://www.yorku.ca/procurement/