

How to Start a Go Congress

The AGA has a fairly standard method of choosing sites for the Congress. People express interest in holding one, discuss it with folks who have done it, and then develop a plan to submit to the AGA Executive Committee and the annual chapter meeting which occurs at each Congress. Ideally, the first presentation (Very brief, with little detail) occurs 2 or 3 years ahead of the planned event. At that time, it is still based on estimates, but will indicate the site(s) being considered and their current costs. (You will never be given an actual quoted price that far in advance.) It will also indicate how the organizing group expects to get the work done. This is mainly an issue of identifying people who will take on the major organizing tasks.

Remember that a Congress is a business (doing about \$250,000 of business in a week) that requires many resources to be strongly and narrowly focused in a very short period of time. So, it may be worthwhile to spend 20 hours in January if it will save you even 2 or 3 hours in August, when time will be your scarcest commodity. Think of this as a \$13,000,000 a year business you are organizing. (250K X 52)

Before making the commitment, look at these three types of resources:

Facilities

Human resources

Your own personal resources

FACILITIES

The single biggest decision to be made is the choice of facility. Choosing wrongly can lead to disaster. Most locations have only a few facilities willing and able to handle our requirements at a price we can afford. And they may have to be reserved as much as three years in advance. So, scouting sites is the first order of business. A lot of this can be done by phoning and asking people to send prices for room and board and facilities usage.

Rooms: about 50% to 70% (depending on price) prefer a single room, so you need to find out not only number of beds, but also number of rooms. Recently, about 25% of attendees have chosen to lodge elsewhere, if such lodging is available, unless hotel style accommodations are available on site. In that case, off site participation may dip as low as 15%. A range of options from basic and cheap to fairly luxurious is best.

Other needs: Playing areas, meeting rooms and office space are all needed at least 16 hours a day (8am to midnight.) You must be prepared to have as many as 350 or more players, preferably in one or two rooms. Be sure to ask if tables and chairs are included in the price. Also required are at least six meeting rooms for lectures, meetings and special events. At least one should seat 100 or more in a lecture format. Also, office

space with phone service and ample electrical services. When evaluating costs, look at the total expense, as some facilities charge lots for sleeping space, and less for other needs. And vice versa. Facilities prices (cost of renting playing and meeting space.) are almost always quoted high and are negotiable, so don't faint and give up just because you are quoted \$30,000 for the meeting rooms. The higher the quote, the more likely it is negotiable.

HUMAN RESOURCES

This is NOT a one person job. You will need dependable helpers. The big four are: treasurer/bookkeeper; registration person (large task); event manager: someone to schedule events, see there are no conflicts, see that they occur on time, etc. and the Congress Director. (YOU) None of the first three tasks should be taken by the Congress Director; he/she will have plenty else to do. In recent years it has become increasingly common to have two people leading as co-directors. It is of course important that they are personally compatible with each other, and that the tasks and responsibilities for each are well defined, well understood, and meet each others needs and wishes. They should know and like each other well beforehand. Each must be willing to stand behind and support decisions made by the other in those cases (hopefully infrequent) when a decision must be made without consultation.

A core group of 6-8 works well. It has always been the case that many folks from outside your group will assist immediately before and at the event itself. See the Congress task list for a good idea about what people and skills you will need.

PERSONAL RESOURCES

During the year before your event, the first four months will have a moderate impact on your life, the second a major impact, and the last four will pretty much take over your life. So, it is imperative to clear this with your significant other.

It is certain that you will find hidden talent in your local Go community. And, as a real plus, you will find it in yourself.