PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Steven Wood Schmader, CFEE

INSIDE IFEA'S CONVENTION SITE SELECTION PROCESS

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One of the IFEA's primary directives is to provide high quality educational and networking opportunities. High on that list is our IFEA Annual Convention & Expo, which gathers together many of the top professionals and event organizations in our field to meet, share and discuss the most current insights into the issues, trends and programs affecting our global industry.

As we choose the locations for these important gatherings, we must consider many components (external and internal) to ensure the highest quality experience possible. These range across many operational areas and include (among others):

- Choosing the highest quality properties, with professional staff and support services to work with us in achieving our goals;
- Providing the highest quality experience at the most reasonable cost to our attendees;

- Ensuring that the IFEA, organizationally, remains fiscally sound and successful;
- Tracking attendance trends and history; Developing close partnerships with local members, tourism marketing agencies, media, city officials, corporate leaders and support service providers;
- Ensuring that the properties we choose can meet our space, technical, access, food & beverage, and risk minimalization needs, while maintaining the cost-effective, high quality goals that under-pin everything we do.

Like any event or festival, achieving this visually short list of objectives, involves many long hours of research, negotiations, creative solution-building, and on-site visits. It is not as straight-forward as choosing a destination and knowing that all your needs can be met. We typically aim to confirm and announce our location selection immediately after the first of each year, as that closer proximity negotiation window provides substantial financial and other benefits that we/our attendees would not normally get if we locked in much earlier.

Historically, those who have been attending for many years will recognize that the IFEA has moved convention locations each year, adding further to the list above with the need to build/develop new partnerships, learn new venue footprints and capabilities (from a distance) and completely recreate the wheel on an annual basis. As we look to the future, we have debated the need to revisit and reconsider this and other models (following the examples of many of our professional peer organizations such as IEG, IAFE, OABA, etc.) of repeating a convention location for a multi-year period.

In 2017, given an unexpected, eleventh hour concern with a new property that we were ready to announce, that test opportunity presented itself as a necessity. In response, calling upon the strong partnership that we are pleased to have developed, we made the decision to return to the JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort in Tucson, Arizona for a third year. Based upon the past two years, the response to the beautiful 5-Star, 4-Diamond Starr Pass Resort & Spa has been a very positive one, as have been the benefits provided to our organization and attendees by Marriott and we are very pleased to continue that partnership for one more year.

In the future, we plan to move again, but may again repeat other locations for more than one year, giving us a stronger negotiating and planning position. If we can identify a group of high quality properties that meet our goals effectively, we may, looking head, consider a fixed rotation of those properties.

While we understand the anticipation that a continually changing location creates, our primary focus must be on delivering the education and networking components that are the core of our programming. We hope that content continues to be the driving force for attendance at our conventions as well (as you and your peers have identified in surveys) and we look forward to having you, your staffs, boards, city representatives, volunteers, vendors, et al. join us each year for the top professional gathering of global industry leaders in our field.