

Getting To Yes:

A PLAN FOR WPC ATTENDANCE APPROVAL



You have heard about the great benefits of KY/TN Water Professionals Conference (WPC) and you are interested in attending this year. Your next step may be to justify the value of your attendance to your manager/boss/supervisor. Sound overwhelming? Use the advice below to help you develop your plan and result in your attendance at WPC 2015 in Covington, KY!

Although the advice below may be most helpful for young professionals, developing a clear justification that emphasizes the value of conference attendance is a key skill, and important for career development at any level of experience.

GENERAL TIPS

- Develop a clear plan and research the program, benefits, and costs prior to requesting attendance.
- Consider what the potential return on investment is for the organization sponsoring your attendance at WPC.
- Focus on knowledge transfer: What information will you bring back to your organization?
- Plan on formalizing this information in a brief memo, presentation, or discussion with your team after attending.
- Register early to take advantage of lower registration rates.
- Remember to highlight that it is generally cost effective to attend a large event (like WPC!) with multiple attributes – technical sessions, networking events, continuing education credits, professional development opportunities, large exhibition hall and multiple vendor contacts – instead of trying to attend a number of small events to achieve the same benefits.

As part of your justification, clearly articulate the connection between your organization's needs and opportunities offered by the conference program. These connections may focus on networking opportunities, team building (if more than one person from your team attends), developing an understanding of current tools and technologies, exploring new and innovative technologies, and volunteer opportunities to further your professional development through involvement in KY-TN WEA, KY/TN Section AWWA, and the broader industry.

ADDRESSING TECHNOLOGY & NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES

The following details are important to identify prior to requesting attendance and should be highlighted in your plan to attend WPC:

- **Technical session content** – which sessions will you plan to attend and why?
- **Vendor contacts** – what vendor booths will you visit and why?
- **Current technologies** – which technologies is your organization currently using? Consider the benefits from attending relevant technical sessions and refreshing contact with vendors.
- **Innovative technologies** – which new technologies will be discussed or displayed that you plan to learn more about and bring this new information back to your organization?
- **Training** – are there any training sessions that are relevant to you and your organization? How will this training benefit your professional or technical development?
- **Registration and travel costs** – you will need to have a defensible estimate of your total attendance costs prior to finalizing your attendance plan.

ASSESSING THE COSTS

When developing your total estimated expenses, consider the following costs:

- Registration fees
- Any separate ticketed events
- Regional travel costs (calculate mileage if you drive or train/bus/ airplane ticket costs)
- Lodging costs (consider booking early to take advantage of any hotel blocks)
- Local transportation costs (taxi, shuttles, rental car, parking, gas)
- Food per diem

HIGHLIGHTING RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Once you have impressed your manager/boss/supervisor and you are on your way to WPC, consider how you will implement your attendance plan and how you will organize the information and contacts you collect at WPC. Take notes or develop your own way of remembering the details! Consider noting the following:

- **Session information:** Title, speakers' names, summary, major takeaways, action items (for each session)
- **Networking events:** Summary, major takeaways, action items, attendees you spoke with and their contact information
- **Vendors and products/technologies:** Description, contact information, benefits, action items

When you return from WPC, make sure to formalize your acquired knowledge with a brief memo, presentation and/or discussion with your team. This will document the benefits of your attendance and provide a good record of what you learned at WPC. Make sure you provide the return on investment that you promised in your attendance plan!

See you in July! ●