



Site Selection and Procurement of Hotels

Finding the best hotel venue in which to hold your conference can be a time-consuming project. The University of Maryland's location in the Baltimore/Washington/Annapolis metropolitan area, which is a thriving hospitality environment, makes it very attractive as a site for conferences. However, it can also be hard to choose from so many and varied properties. Site Selection can involve many hours of visiting hotels, meeting and talking with sales representatives, outlining specific requirements for your program and analyzing each venue as to suitability. C&VS provides site selection and contracting for a hotel venue as part of our meeting planning services and will include you, as the client, in developing the various specifications required to host your program. We have developed a knowledge of the many hotels in our area and can help to inform you of the possibilities that the University's location affords us.

C&VS staff are trained in University of Maryland procurement responsibilities and processes and have delegated authority for contracting for those related to conference projects. As a University faculty/staff, you are not authorized to sign any hotel contract; this is for your protection from any liability. There are several steps involved in the site selection and hotel contracting process.

1. Meet to discuss conference needs.

This first step is a very important part of the process so that our staff can learn more about your program and ask critical questions that will help to identify key requirements. Since the procurement of a venue can take up to two months or more, this meeting should take place even before determining exact dates for your program. Flexibility of dates can help you to get better rates. You also need to firm up your venue prior to announcing your program. We suggest that this step take place at least one year out. (NOTE: if you come to us less than 90 days and ask for this service, our fees will increase by 10% for a "rush" endeavor) At this stage, it is always helpful to have past history about the conference if it has been held before. It is especially important to know how many people booked a hotel room, what types of food functions are generally included in the program and the sizes of meeting spaces that are needed. If this is a first time event, you will need to think about how many people to plan for and we will assist you in helping you to limit your risk as you embark on this new venture.

2. Develop and draft a list of requirements and requests.

After meeting to discuss your program and needs, C&VS will draft these and you, as the client, will review these materials to ensure it accurately reflects your needs. Typical requirements may include free wireless access in guest and/or meeting rooms, a certain number of upgraded rooms for planners/staff, concessions on parking fees, the number and size of meeting rooms, number of sleeping rooms, meals required and other details that may be specific to your program (e.g. close to metro or provision of transportation due to a large number of international guests without cars). C&VS also encourages that, as part of the University's sustainability initiatives, you include a clause that states we give preference to venues that have active and ongoing sustainability programs and policies.

3. Identify potential properties in the geographical area of interest.

If you know the area in which you want to hold your event, this narrows down the search. In our initial consultation, we can assist with suggestions for various hotels of which we have knowledge and with which we have previously contracted for other programs. Our staff has extensive experience with venues in Annapolis, Baltimore, Bethesda, Washington D.C. and, of course, College Park. We are also able to locate and contract for hotels outside our immediate area. We have accompanied clients to Denver, Phoenix, Philadelphia, Virginia and Montreal. For hotels outside our area, a site visit by a C&VS planner may be required and you would incur additional costs for our staff to visit these venues prior to your conference.



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4. Issue a formal Request for Quotation (RFQ).

Issuing a formal Request for Quotation (RFQ) is required by the University procurement office and is a very detailed, prescribed process that our staff will perform on your behalf. The RFQ gives a specific date that responses must be received or they will not (cannot) be considered. The client or client representative should not discuss the bids or negotiate anything outside of this bid process because it will be seen as a violation of the State and University procurement regulations. Hotels may contact the C&VS meeting planner for clarifications to the RFQ. Generally, the RFQ is sent out to three or four hotels that have been pre-screened and are likely to be able to meet the specifications (i.e. if the hotel size cannot accommodate the meeting space required, they would not be included in the group to be sent the RFQ).

5. Analyze responses to RFQ, issue award and request hotel contract.

Once the proposals are received, your C&VS meeting planner will rate the responses and compare costs of various items (catering, lodging, etc.) and share this with you. The contract will be awarded to the hotel that provides the best pricing structure. We will process a purchase order and the contract will be signed by a University representative.

6. After-Contract Care will then begin.

Once the contract is signed, C&VS will oversee that the contract terms are met, negotiate any changes that may need to be made as the planning for your program progresses, and insure all deadlines outlined in the contract are adhered to. After the contract is signed, regular communication between the parties regarding potential changes in the scope of the event may help the parties address potential problems before they arise. This requires a regular review of the contract and regular contact with the hotel staff which we will again do on your behalf. If major changes are required, a change order may need to be processed to cover any additional expenses.

