**Instructions for a prospective CNS Meeting Local Organizer**

*Criteria for selection of a CNS Meeting Local Organizer*

Usually we receive several proposals that are competitively evaluated. The criteria used are listed below. Of course we prefer that proposals receive high scores for all criteria listed, but lower scores in one criterion can be compensated by excellence in others.

* Attractiveness (in summer) and accessibility of the location. For many CNS attendees the meeting coincides with summer holidays and an attractive location will attract more people.
* Suitability and attractiveness of the venue. Suitability refers to the criteria listed below. Attractive historical buildings or outside park grounds will attract more people but attendees expect also modern video and wireless equipment.
* The strength and experience of the local organizing team. As outlined further in this document being a Local Organizer is a lot of work.
* The local computational neuroscience community. How many local scientists (within a few 100 km distance) will be attracted to come to this meeting who might not travel to CNS otherwise?
* The projected cost of the meeting. CNS is a meeting for young people and OCNS tries to keep the registration fees low, this implies relatively low organization costs for the CNS meeting.
* Additional income from local sponsors or grants. We know that at the time of application this cannot always be guaranteed but a realistic assessment should be made. Especially if the proposed location is not served by cheap airlines funding for additional travel awards is strongly recommended.

Strong proposals that cannot be honored may be asked to organize a later CNS meeting.

*General Information on CNS Meetings:*

The CNS meeting is a five day scientific meeting that is usually held in the month of July from Saturday till Wednesday. It alternates between locations in Europe (odd years) and in the rest of the world (even years). The meeting is conducted in English.

The structure of the meeting is the following (times are approximate and may change):

* Saturday: Tutorials  
   9 – 12 Tutorials (several small and medium-sized rooms)  
   13:30 – 16:30 Tutorials (several small and medium-sized rooms)  
   17 – 18:30 Plenary session (large lecture room)  
   18:30 – 20:00 Welcome reception
* Sunday – Tuesday: Main Meeting  
  *model 1 early dinner*  
   9 – 12 Plenary session (large lecture room)

14 – 18 Plenary session (large lecture room)  
 19:30 – 22:30 Poster session (large hall)  
*model 2 late dinner*  
 9 – 12 Plenary session (large lecture room)

14 – 17 Plenary session (large lecture room)  
 17 – 20 Poster session (large hall)  
On Monday the morning session ends with the annual OCNS Members Meeting in the large lecture room

Banquet: usually on Monday evening

* Tuesday – Wednesday: Workshops

Tuesday is an overlap day with elements of both the workshops and the main meeting. There is some flexibility to the organization but rooms are needed to accommodate both workshops and lectures/poster sessions.  
 9 – 12 Workshops (several medium-sized and large rooms)  
 14 – 18 Workshops (several medium-sized and large rooms)

Coffee breaks of ~20 minutes are scheduled twice a day on every day.

The number of participants tends to fluctuate from year to year but has been increasing steadily, therefore it is important to have enough capacity (see details below). Total recent attendance was 550-800 for European meetings and 220-350 for non-European meetings.

Pre-or post-meeting satellites related to computational neuroscience can also be organized, although they need not be a formal part of the meeting.

*Budget*

The CNS meeting has been a source of income to OCNS, used to sponsor other initiatives in computational neurosciences. It is therefore important that a realistic budget is planned that fully covers **all** local costs of the meeting at an expected registration income of about $250/attendee for a minimum number of attendees. More expensive meetings therefore require guaranteed local sponsoring.

In the proposal the LO is required to provide a budget in US$ that is divided into fixed costs categories and those that scale with the number of attendees. An estimate of the number of attendees should be provided based on known size of the local CNS community combined with historical patterns for meetings in that area of the world. The budget proposal is rather schematic to facilitate comparison among proposals but it is the LO’s duty to make it as complete as possible. Therefore we provide for information also a “Final budget” spreadsheet that will be used as the basis of negotiation between OCNS and the selected LO and that can be used in the proposal phase to check whether all needed expenses are covered.

If accepted, OCNS will negotiate with the LO a complete and final budget. This budget includes **all** local, sponsor and OCNS provided income and **all** local expenses for the meeting. There should be firm agreement about all listed items needed (these vary depending on local rules) no later than 12 months before the meeting and final prices for all items by end of December in the year before the meeting. This budget includes a buffer for small, unforeseeable expenses. This budget agreement will be signed by both parties. Once agreement is reached the LO cannot add items or change their cost without renegotiation with the OCNS Treasurer.

Within the constraints of the budget agreed upon OCNS will advance money or pay bills as needed to allow the LO to manage the finances of the meeting. The LO is responsible for tracking the income and expenses in an accounting spreadsheet based on the agreed final budget. This information should always be available to the OCNS Treasurer for control and the accounting should be fully finalized 3 months after the meeting so that a final financial report on the meeting can be prepared by year’s end for tax purposes by OCNS.

*Sponsoring and grants*

The LO is strongly encouraged to obtain maximal local financial support under the form of sponsoring or competitive grants. OCNS will provide support for this as needed. Such income is normally part of the overall meeting budget. Target areas for sponsoring are the social activities and the cost of the venue while grants can give travel support for speakers and for young scientists attending the meeting

*Local organizer of the CNS Meeting*

The duties of the local organizer (LO) are listed in detail at the end of this document. In general the LO is responsible for proposing a proper location and budget for the meeting and for organizing the social activities.

After the proposal is awarded OCNS will negotiate detailed planning with the LO as described under Budget. The LO will then monitor expenses to be sure that they stay within budget. The LO needs to make sure that there is a bank account where income from OCNS and sponsors can be received and that can be used to pay bills in a flexible manner without overhead or other excessive costs.

In addition the LO is responsible for advertising the meeting among local (city + state or country) colleagues and for finding local sponsors and supporting grants. The LO is responsible for negotiating all contracts necessary, some of these contracts (especially for the meeting location) may be signed by OCNS. The LO maintains the contacts with all local contractors as needed.

During the meeting the LO will provide sufficient volunteers to help with set-up, registration desk, pointing people to rooms, checking badges, carrying around microphones during question sessions, etc.

Because of these extensive duties we strongly advise that the LO is a team and suggest the following duties that should be carried out by different people: main local organizer, local treasurer, local speakers contact, local webmaster, local sponsor contact.

The main local organizer becomes an ex officio member of the OCNS Board of Directors for 3 years, starting in the year preceding the meeting.

Because OCNS runs entirely as a volunteer-based society the default assumption is that this also applies to the LO. But it may be useful for the LO to involve professional administrative support or companies for specific aspects of the meeting, provided that this does not inflate the cost of the meeting. Exceptionally a professional conference organizer can take on most of the LO duties, with the main local organizer still responsible for local scientific contacts and sponsoring. In general costs for professional support should not be more than $5000.

*Venue and room requirements*

Room requirements depend on the estimated total number of registrants. Historically 30-40% of registrants were present for the tutorials, 80-90% for the main meeting and 70% for the workshops. All rooms should have video projection to which laptops can be connected. In addition the plenary session room should have audio equipment, both for the speaker and a few wireless microphones that can be used by audience members to ask questions. Audio may also be advised for the larger tutorials/ workshop rooms. Please check the quality of both audio and video equipment so that it is of the high standard expected (i.e., ability to adjust automatically to different display settings, bright projection, colors clearly distinguishable and picture being well focused. For the audio, wireless headsets are the preferred solution) and that the video screen can be seen well from all locations (if needed provide two screen projection). Attendees expect to have effective wireless access in all meeting locations, this may be password protected. Make sure that this equipment can handle about 400 connections in parallel with sufficient bandwidth.

In general OCNS prefers to have the meeting in a nice location, we should not forget that this meeting occurs during the summer holiday period for most attendees. The preference is to have all meeting activities in a single building or adjoining buildings. In the past the Workshops were sometimes organized in a completely separate location. This is acceptable provided this does not require attendees to change hotels or accommodation to reach the Workshops.

*Tutorials*: some are more popular than others so it is best to have a few larger rooms and several smaller ones. For a small meeting plan for 6 rooms (15 – 30 people) and for a large meeting 10 rooms (20 – 50 people). These numbers may vary considerably during the tutorial day, as a rough guideline one should provide twice as much seats as estimated number of attendees. Make sure that these rooms either have air conditioning or large windows that can be opened. It must be possible to darken the room for the data projection.

*Plenary session*: a theatre style room that can seat 400 (small meeting) to 700 attendees (large meeting) or more. Exceptionally two rooms can be provided for large meetings where the presentation in the main room is simulcast in the second room, in that case costs for both rooms and all equipment needed should be listed in the budget. Availability of fold-out tables on the seats is a plus. Adequate air conditioning must be ensured, check the efficacy on-site in summertime and make also sure that seating is comfortable.

*Poster session*: one or more large spaces that can accommodate 100 posters (small meeting) to 170 posters (large meeting). The poster boards should preferentially be in landscape format, but these may not be available in some locations (if portrait: minimum 1 m wide). It is important to ensure that adequate lighting and enough space around posters is available (5 square meters/55 square feet per poster is the absolute minimum). The poster space should have proper acoustics to handle hundreds of people talking at the same time. Please include chairs (say one per row of poster boards) for tired presenters. Sufficient plug points for connecting power cords of laptops and computers should be available. Check for the possibility to provide cheap drinks or mineral water during the poster sessions, also provide pins and check for a possibility for attendees to print posters if needed (information about copy shop nearby, opening times and prices).

*Workshops*: some are more popular than others so it is best to have a few larger rooms and several smaller ones. For a small meeting plan for 6 rooms (20 – 50 people) and for a large meeting 10-12 rooms (30 – 60 people). Otherwise, the same guidelines as for the tutorial rooms apply.

*Additional requirements*:

* One OCNS meeting room for 25 people should be made available each day Saturday – Tuesday, with refreshments or lunch as required.
* Adequate and prominent booth/table space should be made available for up to 5 international sponsors for the meeting (more if you expect local sponsors). The sponsors expect not to sulk in a dead-end corridor, but be located in a frequently visited space (e.g. between lecture hall and catering area/poster area). When providing tables, please provide table covers. Access to plug-points for computer displays etc. must be available near the booth

*Food and social activities*

*Refreshments:*

Coffee breaks and snacks should be provided twice a day, all days. If poster sessions occur during the evening, drinks (bar setup) and snacks should be made available. Lunch or refreshments should be provided for board, executive and program committee meetings that occur during lunch or in an afternoon session.

In addition, it is important that attendees can find sufficient restaurants that provide lunch, and dinner in the case of early dinner, close to the meeting location in a timely manner. If this is not practical then it is advised to sell lunch (sandwiches, lunch boxes, …) at the meeting location.

*Social activities:*

*Opening reception*: on Saturday evening with simple alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and some snacks (this is not dinner). It is a first occasion to showcase local specialties. The cost of this opening reception is included in the registration fee.

*Banquet:* Typically, on one of the main meeting days but preferentially on Monday, a dinner and/or outing is planned. This can take various forms depending on the local organizer who may wish to highlight local aspects in various ways – e.g., a museum outing, boat cruise, culinary delights in a sit-down dinner etc. The cost of this dinner is not included in the registration fee (target complete cost $60-$80/attendee). Registrants order banquet tickets at the time of registration and can buy additional tickets for accompanying persons.

*Party:* On other meeting days, a party can be planned by the local organizer – e.g., ‘CNS rock ‘n roll band’, DJ dancing etc. The LO is strongly advised to find local sponsoring for such an event.

*Accommodation*

About half of the attendees to CNS meetings are students or postdocs with limited budgets. Therefore it is important to provide cheap lodging opportunities close to the meeting site or reachable by efficient public transportation. The LO should make dedicated student housing available if this is possible.

*Transportation and Visas*

Most CNS attendees will come from distant places so efficient access to an airport with international flights is important. Visa requirements may affect attendance so should be noted in the proposal. Also, there should be good transportation options to reach the meeting venue and surrounding hotels from this airport. If efficient public transportation is available then this can be used as an option to allow people to stay in accommodation further from the meeting venue. In that case it may be attractive to include a transportation pass in the registration package, especially if favorable (bulk) rates can be obtained.

**Respective duties**

*OCNS takes care of the following:*

* Abstract submission, review and selection (Program Committee).
* Selection of keynote speakers and inviting them (Program Committee). Traditionally at least one keynote is selected from the local (national) scientific community.
* The complete scientific program of the meeting and publishing the abstracts (Program Committee).
* Composing the program book in consultation with LO for local content (OCNS Liaison to LO).
* All registration is through the OCNS website. Onsite registration also is done through the OCNS website and sufficient computers with a reliable internet connection (not wireless!) in a discrete location (so that people can enter credit card info) should be provided to make this possible. OCNS provides badge info, either as lists or as ready to print files. OCNS also provides up to date info on number of banquet tickets ordered, program books and T-shirt orders. (OCNS Registration).
* International publicity and mailings announcing all meeting related activities (OCNS Outreach).
* Contacts with international sponsors (OCNS Sponsorship Chair).
* Soliciting applications for travel awards to attendees and making the selection. OCNS guarantees a budget for travel awards but strongly encourages additional travel awards sponsored with local funding. In that case clear arrangements on who will pay the ‘local’ travel awards should be made in advance. (OCNS Travel Awards).
* The meeting website, but not all of its content (OCNS Webmaster).
* Event insurance and liability insurance (OCNS Treasurer).
* Pays the local expenses as agreed upon in the Final Budget. OCNS can advance money as needed but prefers to pay large bills directly if possible (OCNS Treasurer).
* OCNS will waive registration for the LO team (max 5 people, all must have clear duties) and volunteers (in proportion to number of attendees: minimum 5 plus 1 for every 200 attendees). (OCNS Registration).

*The LO takes care of the following:*

* Having an overhead free meeting bank account that can receive sponsor and OCNS income and can be used to pay bills.
* Local and national publicity for the meeting, including announcing abstract submission and registration deadlines.
* Finding local and national sponsors and applying for local and national grants. Providing a contact person for sponsors.
* Continuous contact with all local contractors: meeting venue, caterers of coffee breaks and opening reception, banquet, etc.
* Continuously monitor expenses and provide updated accounting. Follow the agreed upon “Final budget” and, if needed, negotiate budget changes with the OCNS Treasurer. Provide final and complete accounting within 3 months after the meeting.
* Take care of local arrangements (hotel, local transportation if needed) of keynote speakers, in consultation with the Chair of the Program Committee. If local sponsoring or grants support some keynote speakers possibly also handles their travel arrangements.
* Find and recommend affordable hotels and restaurants close to the venue, if available gets access to student housing.
* Website content about the meeting venue, local lodging info, restaurant and travel info, etc. It is best to have a dedicated Local webmaster who can regularly update this information. The CNS meeting website is based on a content management system, the webmaster does not require special training.
* Local volunteers to help with miscellaneous duties during the meeting itself, like set-up, manning the registration desk, pointing people to rooms, checking badges, carrying around microphones during question sessions etc.
* LO is responsible for printing the badges, info provided by OCNS. Agreement in advance on when first badge info should be provided.
* LO is responsible for printing the program book. Most attendees will use an electronic version of the program book, only those books that have been ordered should be printed.
* LO should provide a T-shirt design (local flavor) for review by OCNS. LO should take care of the printing of T-shirts. These are pre-ordered through the registration website but additional ones can be sold on site. In practice not more than 100 T-shirts should be ordered unless there are exceptional large pre-orders.