

Organizing Local PFLAG Conferences



Presented by:
Kelly Hemmer
Kathy King-Watters
Ann McAuliffe
Andrew Zanevsky



Introductions and Mission

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Organizing a PFLAG Conference =
Organizing a Wedding for 200 People on a Shoestring Budget



Introductions and Mission

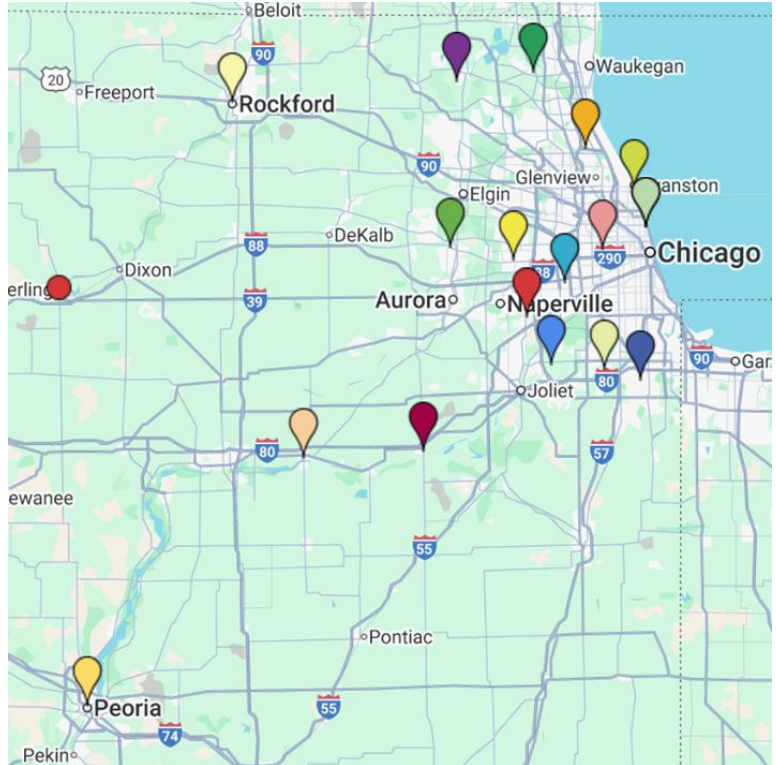
Presenters:

Presenter	PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois	Chapter
Kelly Hemmer	Secretary	Past President of PFLAG DuPage
Kathy King-Watters	Director at Large	First Lady of PFLAG Tinley Park
Ann McAuliffe	Vice-President	President of PFLAG Deerfield
Andrew Zanevsky	President	

Introductions and Mission

PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois

- Coalition of 18 PFLAG chapters
- Provides **services to chapters**: website, newsletter, voicemail, email, applying for grants, POC with press/organizations/public, purchasing supplies in bulk
- Organizes **large common projects**: scholarship for LGBTQ+ students, biennial conferences, fundraisers, Chicago Pride Parade participation, tabling at art festivals, community fairs, Pride events, Navy Pier Pride, Shedd Aquarium, SideTrack bar, sports games
- Facilitates **experience-sharing** between chapters, helps new chapters form
- Sends speakers to **corporate Pride events**, organizes corporate volunteer activities
- **Produces pin buttons** used as swag at outreach events



Introductions and Mission

- **Mission:** Organize local PFLAG conferences every other year, bridging the gap between National Conventions
- **Goals:**
 - Education
 - Networking
 - Community building
 - Partnerships with schools and other orgs
 - Idea incubator for chapter meetings
 - Have fun!
- **Objective** of this presentation: provide an adaptable blueprint for chapters to organize local PFLAG conferences

Getting Started

Getting Started

Gather a Planning Team

- **Needed Skills:**
 - Project Management/Organizing, Finance, IT, Marketing/Communications, Programming, Catering, Decorations, Volunteer Management, Graphic Design.
- **What skills are lacking?**
 - Recruit a volunteer to do a specific job
 - Educate Yourself
 - Hire a Professional
- **Divide & Conquer**
 - Delegate tasks to individuals or teams
 - Trust them to make decisions for their area

Getting Started

Planning & Critical Project Stages

- Project anticipated attendance.
- Estimate budget.
- Choose format (single track vs. parallel).
- Secure venue (ideally donated, with AV, accessible, parking, catering rules considered).
- Keynote speaker search (rank list, approach one by one).
- Select topics, workshops, panels; secure presenters.
- Other big tasks: catering, decorations, registration, organizing volunteers, finding exhibitors, entertainment.

Getting Started

Budget and Funding

- Donated venue (a paid venue may cost several thousand dollars)
- Admission fee & donation model (low cost ticket and plea for donation)
- Sponsors
- Chapter reserve funds
- Volunteers (paid staff or contractors would increase costs dramatically)
- Cost per attendee: \$66 at our last conference

Getting Started

Take Time to Plan

- Create a timeline for tasks.
- Think through the specifics of what will need to be done the day of your event.
- Do as much as possible before event
 - Set up
 - Train volunteers
 - Assemble things (decorations, name badges, etc.)
 - Test AV
 - Try out ideas

Schedule w/ Presenters & Hosts			
	Projector	Whiteboard	
Room	Name	Presenter/ Moderator	Host/ Facilitator
Welcome & Keynote - 8:45am - 9:00am			
Arbor	Art Johnston		
Arbor	Brian Bond	Remote	
Breakout 1 - 10:00am - 10:45am			
Arbor	Gender: Trans Panel		
Gallery	Advocacy: Coping		
Class B	Relationship: Community		
Class C	Spirituality: Clobber		
Class D	Allyship: A Gift		
Lab	Education: Let Freedom		
Breakout 2 - 11:00am - 11:45am			
Arbor	Relationship: Corporate		
Gallery	Gender: Coping		
Class B	Advocacy: Safety		
Class C	Spirituality: Queer Lens		
Class D	Allyship: Safe Schools		
Lab	Education: Title IX		
Roundtables - 12:15pm - 1:00pm			
Arbor	None		
Gallery	Navigating Family Conversations		
Class B	Creating Stronger Parent		
Class C	Effective Allyship		
Class D	Intersectionality		
Lab	Navigating Legal & Medical		
Final Session 1:15pm - 2:50pm			
Arbor	Chicago Gay Men's Chorus		
Arbor	Closing Remarks		

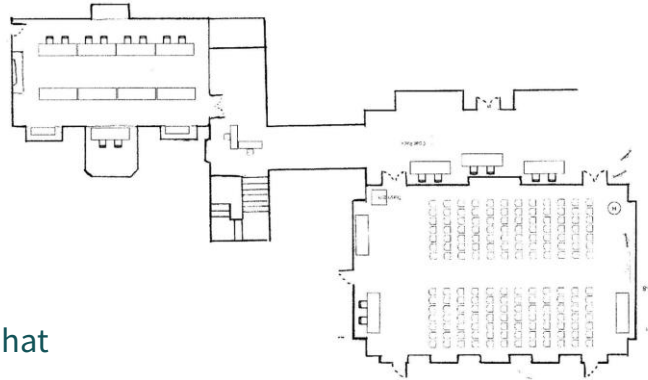
Elements of Conference Planning

Things that are an essential part of planning a conference

Elements of Conference Planning

Venue considerations:

- Cost - can you find a donated or discounted space?
- Capacity
 - Do you need a single space large enough for all attendees?
 - Do you want breakout spaces? What are capacity limits of rooms?
- Restrictions
 - If food not allowed, where will people eat lunch?
- Time for Setup/Cleanup
- Travel Time
- Parking: proximity, quantity, and cost
- ADA accessibility
- AV capacity: hookups to projectors, wifi



Do an onsite visit

- Take lots of pictures
- Ask for a floor plan (or sketch one yourself)
- Take notes

Elements of Conference Planning

Catering

- **Options** are: Box Lunch, Buffet or Plated Meal.
- **Select Caterer** - Do this in advance! Continental Breakfast & Box Lunch
- Consider 7 most common **Allergens**: Milk, Eggs, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Wheat (Gluten), Soy, Fish.
- **Select menu** - Include Catering Choices on the Registration Form
- **Place Group Order** on line 2 weeks before event. Schedule **Delivery times** – 1 for Breakfast, 1 for Lunch.
- We used Panera Bread's Regional Catering Office (they handle large Catering orders).
- Panera does not have Gluten Free Bread – so the **Special Meals** were ALL customized SALADS
- **Breakfast** was coffee, tea & individual creamers plus a mix of pastries, bagels & cream cheese plus fruit cups (Gluten Free option).



Elements of Conference Planning

Conference Promotion

- Multiple mailings to chapter members
- Multiple announcements and previews of major program elements in our monthly newsletter
- Direct invites to community partners

2024 Power of PFLAG Conference

Saturday, October 26th, Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL

A Preview of Coming Attractions

By Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

- Select your Lunch Option (including special meal requests)
- Volunteer for PFLAG hosting duties during the Conference
- Donate
- Learn about Sponsorship Opportunities
- Sign up for complimentary post-Conference Arboretum Tours (optional)

Prepare to be Engaged (and Amazed)!



Saturday, October 26th
The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Our biennial conference, **Power of PFLAG**, on October 26th is the biggest project that PCNI organizes every two years. The nine volunteers serving on the Conference Committee have been planning for more than a year now to make the conference a memorable, educational, and fun event. We use a different venue for every conference because PCNI covers a large area, and we want members of all PFLAG chapters to participate and feel included. This year, we are bringing the conference to **The Morton Arboretum**, which has generously donated the space and use of equipment.

Everyone will enjoy a videocall appearance by Brian Bond, PFLAG CEO, the keynote by Art Johnston, a community activist, co-founder of Equality Illinois and partner at Sidetrack, and the closing presentation by Mike Ziri, Public Policy Director at Equality Illinois. The venue - Thornhill Education Center at The Morton Arboretum - has multiple rooms, which will allow us to run several presentations at the same time. During two breakout periods, we'll offer six tracks - that's 12 presentations in addition to common ones! The biggest challenge will be deciding which two out of these twelve presentations you'll attend ☺.

During lunch, we'll offer five informal Lunch Discussion Circles, each one discussing a specific topic in a round-table format. You may also choose to socialize with other attendees during lunch, outside of these Discussion Circles.

The conference will start at 8 AM and close at 3 PM. The Morton Arboretum has graciously offered us free guided walking and riding tours, which you may take after the conference ends. It's a beautiful place, and we hope that a guided tour there will be a perfect ending to a day of learning, making new friends, reconnecting with old ones,

and fully enjoying the PFLAG community. You may also choose to explore The Arboretum without a guide.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided. We have planned so many activities for attendees at this year's conference. During the day, our community partners will host information tables where you can find resources, useful information and make connections. The Gay Men's Chorus will sing for us. Our Button Brigade will share assorted buttons. We'll have a prize raffle. There will be a special spot for taking fun photos and a board to write a message about what the Power of PFLAG means to you. The Conference Committee has put a lot of work into making sure that the event will be an unforgettable and uplifting experience!

Admission costs only \$15 per person because we want to make attending the conference affordable for everyone. This covers only about 20% of the total cost per attendee, so we are asking you to also donate if you can to help PCNI offset the expense. The donation option is on the registration form.

Please consider volunteering on the day of the conference. The whole event is organized by volunteers and is a community event. If you can help, please indicate so on the registration form, and someone from the Conference Committee will contact you to discuss your engagement. Thank you so much!

RSVP for the conference here:
<https://pflagil2024.rsvpify.com>

PCNI Conference Committee:
Andrew, Ann, Beth, Jo, Kathy,
Kelly, Les, Nancy, and Ray



September 2024 | PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois Newsletter

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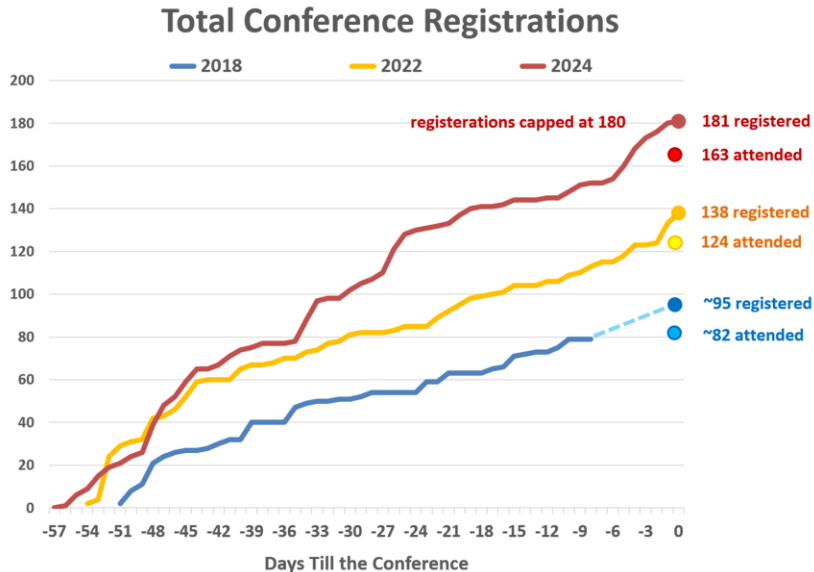
Elements of Conference Planning

Registration:

- Online registration: RSVPify.com, other similar services; Google Forms is free but money collection will be more complicated
 - name, pronouns, email
 - collect ticket fees and ask for donations (doubled our collections by introducing donations)
 - food allergies/dietary restrictions - prepare a menu of food options before implementing the registration form
 - may include the program (draft), directions, map, and additional info
 - may create coupons for discounted or free registration (for speakers, VIP guests, exhibitors)
- Registration starts ~2 months out
- Data from previous conferences predicts the curve of signups

Elements of Conference Planning

Registrations and Attendance Tracking



Elements of Conference Planning

Speakers and Panelists:

- Decide how many sessions and how many speakers per session.
- Do you want to make the sessions follow particular themes?
 - Decided on six tracks per session: Advocacy, Education, Gender Affirming Care, Spirituality, Allyship, & Relationship Building
- Formats included panels AND individual speakers.
- VERY important to us to have a diverse pool of speakers, especially BIPOC and LGBTQ+.



Elements of Conference Planning



Sessions Schedule

	Arbor Room	Gallery	Classroom B
10:00 - 10:45 Workshop Session 1	Gender Affirming Care Panel of Trans Adults	Advocacy Coping Strategies and Mental Health for Ourselves in a World that is Hostile for Our Loved Ones	Relationship Building Community Partners
11:00 - 11:45 Workshop Session 2	Relationship Building Corporate Partners	Advocacy Safety While Being an Advocate	Gender Affirming Care Coping at the Intersection of Gender Dysphoria and Other Mental Health Disorders
12:15 - 1:00 Roundtables	No Discussion Just Lunch	Navigating Family Conversations Around Gender Identity	Creating a Stronger Parent Support Network



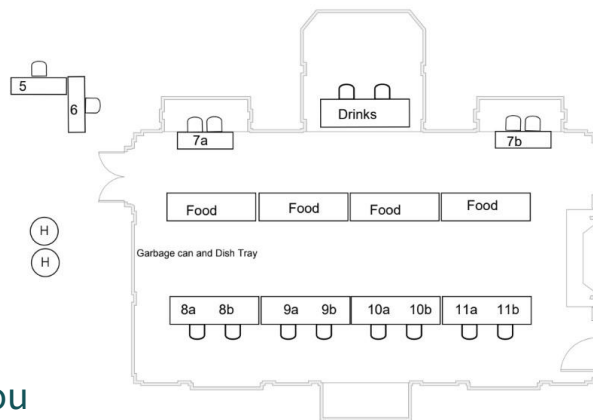
Sessions Schedule

Classroom C	Classroom D	Classroom E	
Spirituality Clobber Passages	Allyship LGBTQ+ Allyship - A Gift	Education Let Freedom Read	10:00 - 10:45 Workshop Session 1
Spirituality A Queer Lens on Scripture	Allyship Creating Safe Schools	Education Title IX and Your Child's Rights at School	11:00 - 11:45 Workshop Session 2
Effective Allyship: Beyond Awareness to Action	Intersectionality in LGBTQ+ Advocacy	Navigating Legal and Medical Challenges	12:15 - 1:00 Roundtables

Elements of Conference Planning

Exhibitors:

- Similar to our speaker pool, it was VERY important that our exhibitors include groups that represented BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people. Consider how much space you have for tables to predetermine how many spaces you have and how many groups you can invite.
 - Half tables to fit more groups.
 - Is this also your lunch space?
- Free space and registration to our exhibitors.
- Will there be dedicated time to visit exhibitors or will it be during lunch and “passing periods?”
- Will anyone be collecting physical goods as donations? That will require extra space.



Elements of Conference Planning

Exhibitors



Elements of Conference Planning

Sponsorship:

- PCNI is relatively new to **Fundraising**
- **Sponsors:** essential to offset net cost; example: \$5,000 sponsorships covering budget gap
- Major Input / **Inspiration**
 - One PCNI Team member had experience fundraising with another organization
 - PFLAG Denver President shared their fundraising packet & structure
- We developed 4 **Sponsorship Tiers** plus “Perks” at each level
- Champion \$5000, Advocate \$2500, Ally \$1000, Supporting \$500
- **Employer / Corporate Partner Letter** (Template)
- **Employee Letter** (Template)



Elements of Conference Planning

Printed Materials:

- What will you need?
 - Program, Name Tags, Signs (directional, schedule, informational), Posters for decoration
- Find Printer
 - Cost (are there volume discounts)
 - Turn around time
 - What exactly will they need (type of file and how submitted varies)
- Make deadlines early
 - Ask people to turn in bios, etc. at least a week before you actually need them
- Have multiple proofreaders



Elements of Conference Planning

Volunteers:

- Many tasks to be done
 - Setup, Registration, Room monitors, VIP assistants, Emcee, AV support, Catering, Cleanup
- Recruit Day-Of Volunteers
 - Keeps Planning Team free to deal with problems
 - Allows planning team to enjoy the event!
- Split Responsibilities Among Planning Team
- Have more than you think you will need
 - You won't be scrambling if you have no shows
 - Spread the work around so volunteers can enjoy the event!
- Assign tasks ahead of time, but be flexible day of



Enhancements and Innovations

The extras that add to the conference experience

Enhancements and Innovations

Entertainment:

- FashionBar Chicago trans/NB fashion show (2022)
 - The day ended with a fashion show with TGNC models.
- Morton Arboretum venue + Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (2024)
 - After lunch, CGMC performed.
 - After the close of the workshop, the Arboretum offered free tours.
 - MUST consider ADA accessibility of anything like this!



Enhancements and Innovations

The Morton Arboretum - 2024



Enhancements and Innovations

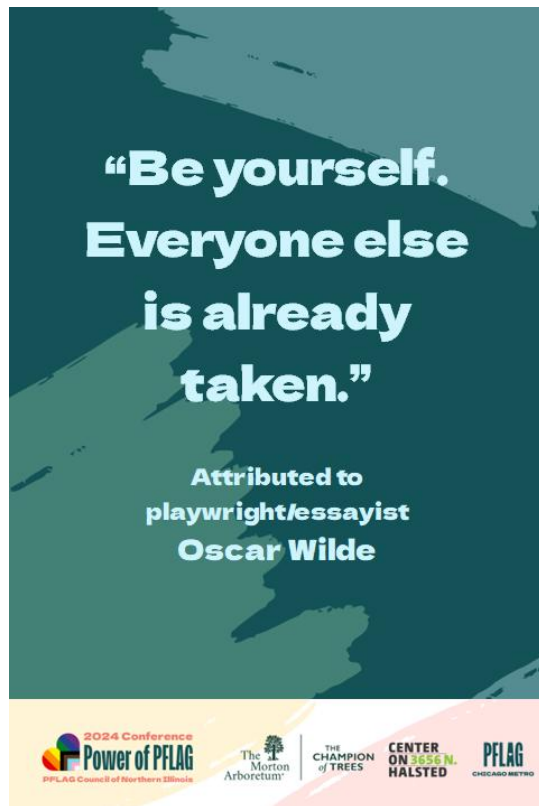
FashionBar Chicago trans/NB fashion show (2022)



Enhancements and Innovations

Decorations:

- Do they contribute to the experience?
 - Interactive
 - Convey message of theme
 - PFLAG Branded
- How long will it take to set-up/clean-up?
 - Keep in mind time constraints
- What to do with after the event?
 - Give to attendees
 - Use again at another event
 - Donate



Enhancements and Innovations

Interactive Features: Photo Op



← Graphics printed on foam board



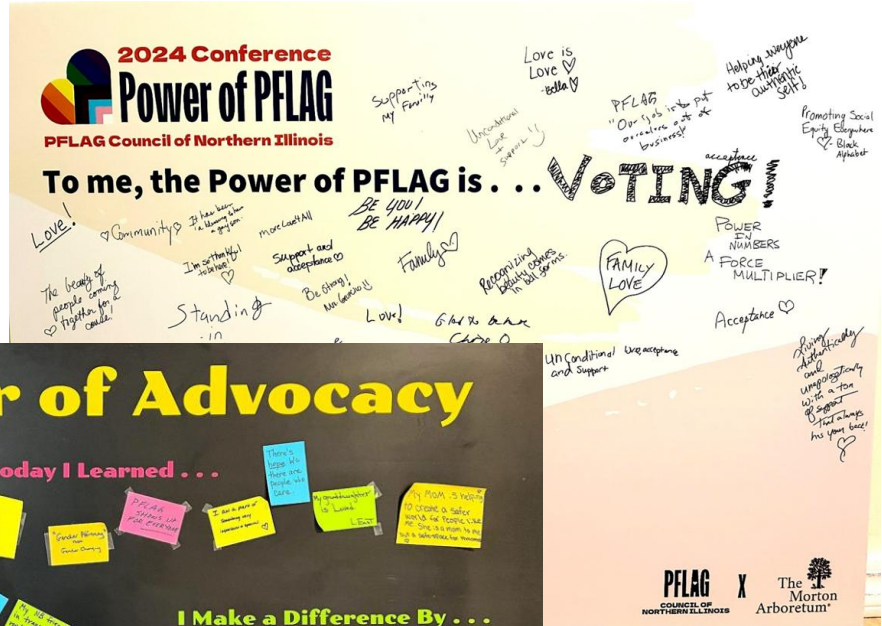
Made our own wings → with silk leaves for conference at The Morton Arboretum

← Can buy online



Enhancements and Innovations

Interactive Features: Message Board



Enhancements and Innovations

Lunch Circles

More Social Time

We hosted 5 optional topics in breakout rooms over lunch, facilitated by PFLAG Leader – like a mini PFLAG meeting.

- Creating a Stronger Parent Support Network
- Effective Allyship: Beyond Awareness to Action
- Intersectionality in LGBTQ+ Advocacy
- Navigating Family Conversations Around Gender Identity
- Navigating Legal & Medical Challenges for Transgender & Non-Binary Individuals

Enhancements and Innovations

Youth Track (2026)

Topics for Young People by Young People - NEW!

- Members want to bring their “kids”, share the experience as a family
- We will collaborate with Youth & Community Partners serving Young People on Topics & Speakers
- Tailored content
- Adult supervisors

Enhancements and Innovations

Guest highlights – video address by Brian Bond



Enhancements and Innovations

Mannequins on Parade – at the 2022 Conference at FashionBar Chicago we dressed up mannequins that were available at that space – last-minute spontaneous add-on



Enhancements and Innovations

Raffle:

- Popular, but there is a tradeoff with workshop time.
- Tickets were in the bags people picked up at registration.
 - Issues: Lost tickets, people leaving early.
- Asked speakers and community partners if they had any swag or goods to donate.
 - Gift certificates.
- Runners to deliver prizes to winners in the crowd.
- In 2024, we used the Fashion Bar designed logo from 2022 on various products from Zazzle: pint glasses, soup mugs, coasters, decks of cards, baseball caps, insulated mugs, ornaments, etc. NOT COFFEE MUGS.
 - Used a discount code to get more bang for our buck!

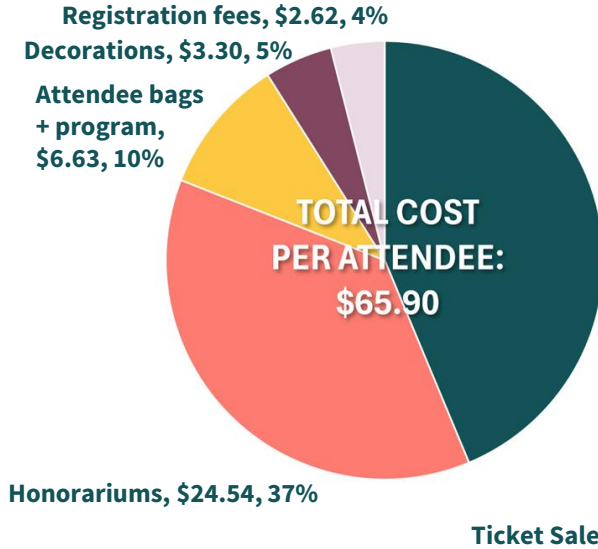


Budget and Funding

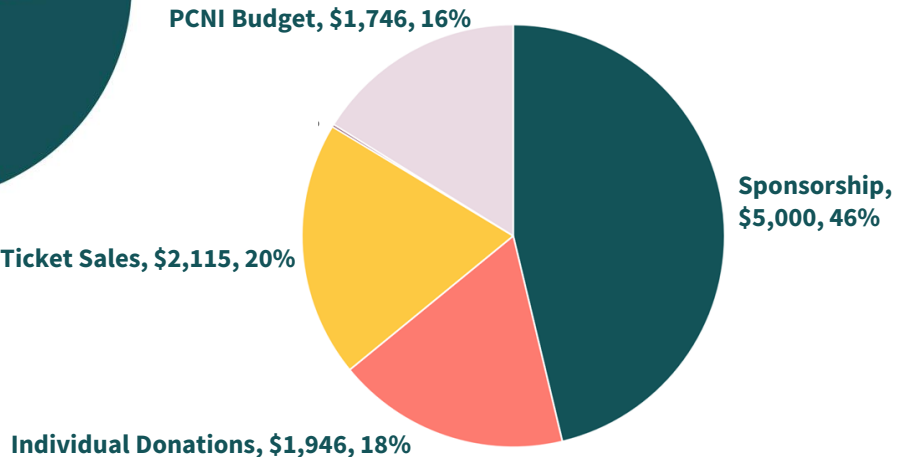
How much a conference costs and how to finance it

Budget and Funding

Cost per Attendee



Conference Revenue



Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

**After the conference it is important to look at
what worked and didn't work**

Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

Operational hiccups

- AV/light issues
- limited cleanup time - ask attendees to help
- organize volunteers work so they don't miss any sessions
- keep water cold for speakers (coolers just for that)
- keep coffee hot!

Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

Hiccups:

- screen malfunction
- weak projector
- DIY is not great
- light switches



Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

Survey – We use a well-designed on-line Survey Tool

- We love data! **Attendee Feedback** informs our choice of:
- Topics
- Timing: October - before the Midterm Elections in November
- Mix of Workshops
- Speaker Selection based on Ratings
- Community Partner/ Exhibitor Presence
- Satisfaction with Logistics: Catering, Location, Parking, etc. for current Conference
- New Ideas (examples) / Suggestions for Future Conferences
 - Repeat Popular Topics / Speakers in a Second Workshop slot
 - Include Young People in next Conference
 - Extend the Day – 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
 - Host an optional Dinner Post-Conference – more socializing

Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

Cleanup lesson:

- Attendees often pitch in – Community spirit matters.
- It's the Rainbow Community!

So many people helped out every step of the way!

- Breaking down boxes from lunch
- Putting away chairs/tables
- Moving everything back out to the cars



Challenges, Lessons Learned, Feedback

- Continuous improvement
- Try new ideas to see what works
- Collect and retain data for future conference cycles:
 - budget
 - survey results
 - lessons learned
- Start looking for sponsors a year before the conference
- Important to have some members of the organizing committee to stay for more than one biennial cycle

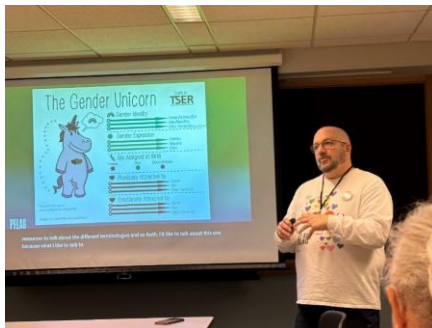
Conclusion

PFLAG Conferences provide:

- Education
- Networking
- Community spirit
- Partnerships with other organizations
- Inspiration for chapter meetings
- Strengthen PFLAG's mission

Call to action: Take this blueprint, adapt locally, and build your own success story. Contact us for help.

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark jacket, is speaking at a wooden podium. Behind him is a banner for the "2024 Conference Power of PFLAG" organized by the PFLAG Council of Northeast Illinois. The banner also mentions the Center for Gender & Sexuality Studies and the PFLAG Chicago Chapter. A laptop is on the podium in front of him.



CONTACT US

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www.pflagil.org



**Presentation slides and
other resources**



<https://pflagil.org/organizing-local-pflag-conferences>