Attachment # G-3a

WEBINARS AS ENHANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

FOR MEMBERS OF THE APA CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

September 23, 2014

This is an initial discussion of opportunities and constraints for APA California as we consider developing a webinar framework to assist Sections in producing webinars for enhanced educational opportunities to members, or to consider this opportunity at the Chapter level. [Information contained here was provided by Bob Leiter, our FAICP Coordinator, who has produced 2 webinars for the Regional Planning Division of APA.]

Questions that must be answered as a webinar program is researched in the Chapter:

* Should the Chapter become the enabler for Sections to produce webinars or should the Chapter also produce webinars?
* Should the Chapter wait and work through National APA as they move beyond the current pilot program with the APA Divisions Council to assure excellent production of our webinars or undertake an effort on our own?
* Should webinars replace or enhance live training opportunities put forward by the Sections?
* Should webinars be revenue-producing [or at least cost-covering] for the CM provider that puts it on? This would entail using a formal registration system to ensure that ‘attendees’ have paid and that we know who can receive CM credit for the webinar
* If webinars do not have a registration component, that means they are free and 1 – the CM provider can’t charge and recover costs, and 2 – it becomes an honor system of who ‘attended’ the webinar to receive CM credit

We are talking about webinars [audio plus PPTs only are used – no cameras to show the presenters live] and NOT video conferencing. Users log onto their computer to access the webinar and see PPT slides along with the audio. Advisable length for a webinar session is 1.0 or 1.5 hours long.

Background: While some APA chapters and divisions have been producing their own webinars using a webcasting service provided by a state university, this service does not provide the sponsor with the option of charging registration fees for the webinar. Last year, APA National Office launched a “pilot project” with the APA Divisions Council to develop a “one-stop shop” where divisions could obtain both webcasting and registration services through the APA National Office for a fixed fee. APA National is now working with the Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division and Latinos and Planning Division through the APA Divisions Council on this pilot program producing two webinars, and the Divisions will then be preparing a handbook on how to produce a successful webinar working with APA National staff to using their Registration Module & their Webcasting Service. APA National staff is constrained at this time, and it’s probable that it would be several months before they would be prepared to work with other CM providers such as state chapters to oversee Registration Modules & Webcasting Services. Once APA National makes this service available to CM providers, it will be popular and National will need to streamline its internal process and possibly add to staffing to handle the volume.

There are 4 major and basic components of producing a webinar: the content; the registration; marketing; and the webcasting itself.

* CONTENT: webinar content needs to be well-thought out. Information needs to be presented in a concise manner to give full CM value. Either the Chapter or a Section or other CM provider would need to develop and test the content. Th webinar sponsor would also need to work with APA to submit for and receive CM credit approval before advertising the webinar.
* REGISTRATION: Then we would need to determine whether we would be charging people to join the webinar. If we do, we need to use a registration module – either our own [when we have one] or use APA National’s. APA National charges $250 for use of their registration module for an event like a short webinar.
* MARKETING – If there’s a goal to make the webinar successful from a financial standpoint, it is necessary to market the webinar in much the same way that a Division or Chapter would market a mini-conference. This involves production of flyers and e-mail announcements, and dissemination of marketing materials to APA components (chapters, sections, divisions and student organizations) as well as to allied organizations. Sections probably have successful methods that are already in use for this purpose. And, if the purpose is to only cover costs, this part of the process could be less complicated.
* WEBCASTING: If the Chapter determined to proceed on our own, we don’t need equipment of our own – we would need to find a webcasting platform vendor that is reliable and is known for quality. These services are available – it is like contracting with a conference call vendor. [If we gained access to APA National’s webinar service, they are currently charging the providers for the pilot project $250 per webinar for its use]. The platform that APA National uses is based in California so maybe we could explore using that provider.

The Chapter currently does not produce training sessions on our own: we co-sponsor sessions with other organizations and the Chapter-produced sessions generally occur at the state conference. Would the Chapter take on the tasks of setting up and managing the webinars for the Sections who produce most of the CM sessions each year? If so, we would likely need a staff member to handle discussions between those producing the webinar content and gathering the speakers and the technical producer of the webinar. If the Chapter took on that task, would we do it with no registration, meaning no charge to participants and no revenue back to the Chapter or Section that produces it. If we did Registration, would the Chapter collect the revenue to cover that event’s registration cost and webcasting service costs? That could mean a Section would not gain the revenue it would from those attending an in-person session.

One other variation to consider here is whether a sponsor (division, chapter or section) would want to produce an on-line version of the webinar that could be viewed by attendees at a later date. As an example of this, the APA National Office produced “Virtual Sessions” for all of its conference sessions at the 2010, 2011, and 2012 National Conferences (PPT only; no video of speakers). Individuals who were not able to attend the conference in person were able to register for a virtual session, view it on-line, and receive CM credits for it. APA National charged $30 per session for registrants. They discontinued this service in 2013 - our understanding is that they determined that it was not making enough money. However, this would be another option for webinar sponsors to consider.

VP&BD.WEBINARS.Sept2013.revised