

# **ACEC/MA Outside Group Promotional Request Policy**

**(Approved at March 25, 2011 ACEC/MA Board Meeting)**

## **Summary of Issue**

ACEC/MA needs a policy to guide decisions about whether and how to cross-promote certain programs offered by other organizations to its membership. This policy is meant to guide the ACEC/MA President and Executive Director with how to handle these program requests, to save time and improve efficiency, while enabling ACEC/MA to strengthen relationships with certain organizations for mutual benefit.

## **BACKGROUND**

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA) is frequently approached by other business associations, professional societies, professional service firms and other businesses seeking to promote their free or fee-based educational and marketing programs to ACEC/MA members. Some of these programs may be of interest to members, but some are also in direct competition with ACEC/MA programs. In addition, the ACEC/MA board is concerned about overusing its email distribution list to market programs offered by other organizations to its members.

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA) offers its members ten monthly programs, plus some specialized Leadership Education programs annually, which the Association seeks to promote in its monthly email news, through event-specific broadcast emails, online postings and direct mail.

ACEC/MA Programs and Leadership Education are a major source of revenue for the Association. From a promotional and revenue generating standpoint, it is in ACEC/MA's self interest to limit access and/or communications to its members and, as a result, ACEC/MA restricts the use of broadcast emails to promoting ACEC and ACEC/MA-sponsored programs and activities.

With increased frequency, ACEC/MA is being asked to promote third-party events to its members, increasing the time needed for ACEC/MA leadership to decide how to handle each request. This Outside Group Promotional Request Policy details guidelines for handling such requests in a standardized way. At the direction of the ACEC/MA President, the ACEC/MA Executive Director may use these guidelines to grant or deny third party promotional requests.

Assumptions underlying ACEC/MA's policy for assessing and responding to third party promotional requests:

- Such requests should be judged on their perceived value to ACEC/MA members. The Association determines this perceived value based on the nature of the organization making the request, the content and scope of the event ACEC/MA is being asked to promote, and the cost for ACEC/MA members to attend the event.
- Events organized by nonprofit organizations are treated differently than those offered by for profit companies.
- Events with broad appeal to ACEC/MA members are treated differently from events with limited appeal.
- Events which ACEC/MA members can attend for little or no cost may be treated differently from events which have a higher cost.
- As a general rule, individuals/entities looking to promote their events to ACEC/MA members will be encouraged to place paid advertisements.
- No cost newsletter advertisements, online calendar postings, targeted emails to members are promotional options, depending upon the nature of the promotional request.

## RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

The ACEC/MA Executive Director and President will consider the following when approached by an organization to promote a program to ACEC/MA members.

### Review of Organization Making the Request

1. Unless the organization is offering significant financial incentives, through revenue sharing or other compensation to ACEC/MA, ACEC/MA will reject all third-party promotional requests made by for profit businesses.
2. Promotional requests from nonprofit organizations that are not affiliated with the engineering or related business professions or ACEC national will also be rejected unless the organization is offering significant financial incentives. (need to discuss NAIOP, SMPS, some others)
3. Promotional requests from nonprofit organizations affiliated with the engineering profession, including The Engineering Center Education Trust Sponsors, other design professional associations, colleges and universities with engineering programs and federal, state or municipal entities will be considered for some type of no net cost promotional support.

### Event Scope/Content

1. In general, promotional requests for events on topics that ACEC/MA is planning to address through its professional development programs or for events that are held on dates that conflict with major ACEC/MA programs will not be considered for promotion.
2. Promotion requests for events on topics that ACEC/MA could address through its programs (but has no plans to) or for events that are held on dates that conflict with non-major ACEC/MA programs will only be promoted to ACEC/MA members via:
  - a. (*Potential options for discussion*): paid advertisements in **Insights**. Events of limited appeal to ACEC/MA members will also be encouraged to place paid newsletter advertisements.
  - b. An email to a subset of ACEC/MA (Committee or Forum) for circulation to this subset of members
  - c. A web calendar posting.
3. Promotional requests for events on topics of broad interest to ACEC/MA members and/or of a scope that ACEC/MA could not easily match will be considered for no net cost promotional support. (by nonprofits, within certain circumstances---need to define)

### Event Costs

ACEC/MA will consider third party promotional requests as an opportunity to:

1. Generate revenue for ACEC/MA (through paid newsletter advertisements, web advertising or revenue sharing sponsorships);
2. Enhance the image of ACEC/MA (also through sponsorships or otherwise having ACEC/MA's name associated with the event); and/or
3. Save ACEC/MA members money (by arranging for discounted ACEC/MA member registration fees).
4. ACEC/MA should seek to obtain such considerations in exchange for extending no cost promotional support in the form of free newsletter advertisements and/or online calendar postings.
5. ACEC/MA should also seek reciprocal promotion of one or more of its events, if possible and practical
6. When time constraints are a factor and ACEC/MA becomes an event sponsor, promotional support via a specialized broadcast email to members may become a viable option.