



Criteria for Membership

Aims and Objectives

As a non profit making sales & marketing consortium, it is crucial that the criteria for membership is framed from the expectations of the customer in relation to excellence. This sets us apart from other similar groups or associations as it is from a customer perspective that we set the criteria for membership. It is therefore vital that a minimum standard be set for ALL members and potential members such that the brand is continually identified with as providing a high quality product. The focus for membership is therefore on facilities, staff, service offer, catering, impact on the environment, customer support and feedback, health, hygiene and safety.

Setting and maintaining a high quality standard allows Venues of Excellence to promote and market what is a diverse group of venues under a single 'brand'. It should not surprise you that in doing this the Board (made up of members) has set the objective that the brand, not only be recognised, but more importantly be synonymous with offering both a first class service and exceptional professional standards.

So, if having understood that quality is at the heart of the consortium, you still wish to progress to membership then you will be required to fill in a short questionnaire. Once in receipt of this the central team will arrange an assessment visit. This will be undertaken by two members of the Board (one of whom is responsible for quality and continuity). They are likely to spend a minimum of three hours assessing your questionnaire against the facility and will accomplish this by visiting a number of areas across the site (details in the questionnaire). Initial feedback will be provided although this will not include the overall outcome of the assessment nor the recommendation to the Board. The Board will make the final decision as to whether the applicant qualifies for membership. A short feedback report will be provided accompanied by a verbal (probably telephone conversation) debrief.

Continuous Improvement of Members

Quality is of no less importance when you are accepted for membership. However, as a member it is not felt that ongoing assessments are as important as continuous improvement on the quality standard at entry level. This will be achieved through two distinct channels, namely:

- Customer evaluation feedback
- Site CI visits/meetings

Site CI visits/meetings

One of the benefits of membership is to encourage and assist you with continuous improvement. This will be accomplished either through linking a visit to a meeting or by means of a dedicated site visit. This is NOT an assessment and is in place to provide members with the latest in best practice from fellow member organisations. Think of the added value it will bring to your organisation by having free consultancy from two experienced members. Even a relatively cheap service initiative could make a significant difference. The objective is therefore through sharing and learning to 'raise the bar', in terms of service provision and facilities across the organisation.

In principle each member will benefit from a visit on a consultancy (even 12-18 month) basis by two fellow members. This will include a short tour of the facilities and a discussion with the GM on what good practice has been witnessed and recommendations for further improvement through, what will be a growing understanding, of best practice from across the group. All members organisations, will be involved in this process and it is foreseen that this will require three inputs annually; one on the receiving end and two CI visits (either through linking the visit to a meeting or a dedicated visit).

The central team will produce an outline schedule in July each year. Amendments to this can be made with the lead person for the CI visit taking responsibility for making the change and keeping the central team informed.

There follows an outline of the criteria:

Client Base Criteria

The venue must have a dedicated business focus on the conferencing, meeting and training market. It must actively seek to attract conference, meeting or training events and must see this as the main source of business or in the case of a hotel/venue that it has a fully dedicated conference facility.

Service Criteria

- Members must show an understanding of the conference and training market with a clear perspective on what is required by the customer.
- Consistent, clear and transparent Terms & Conditions.
- There should be evidence of a booking management system that incorporates customer care policies and a complaints procedure.
- There is dedicated staff to the conference, training and meeting sector of the business with dedicated staff liaising directly with the client before, during and when needed after the event.
- All staff to be aware of the different types of event being run with requests by clients or service recovery being dealt with on a priority basis and in a professional manner.

Facilities Criteria

It will be assumed that in making the application for membership that site cleanliness both internal and external is of a high standard. Management must also show the following more detailed minimum standard:

Conference/training/meeting Rooms

- Dedicated tables and appropriate chairs must be supplied, which lend themselves to extended use and lengthy meetings. The use of 'dining' type tables and chairs is not acceptable in this environment.
- Up to date audio visual equipment be available for the main room booking at no additional charge to the client. Enough projector stock should be held to cover all rooms and where possible these should be permanently fixed or if not with suitable power and cabling outlets close to the projection to ensure customer safety.
- Unlimited flipcharts, pens, paper, whiteboards, and screen.
- Free internet access in the conference rooms. This may be provided by Wi-Fi or hard wired connection. Although it is expected this service will be free a small charge is acceptable for legal/administration purposes. The aim is that ALL venues provide a free or near free service.
- Access to dedicated syndicate rooms all equipped with flipcharts and whiteboards.
- Conference rooms and syndicate rooms to be equipped with controllable lighting providing sufficient overhead lighting to support the 'all' day meeting or training event.
- All rooms to have controllable heating and the majority of rooms are to have natural daylight.
- All rooms are to have clear and unobstructed interior views.
- The rooms must have adequate sound proofing to ensure privacy. This is important when rooms have the flexibility to be sub divided by a 'folding wall'.
- Security must be of high priority throughout the centre to include grounds and car parks.
- Bedrooms must be of an adequate size to incorporate a well-lit working area/desk with a convenient power supply and a comfortable chair.
- Ensuite facilities must be provided with a high standard of towels and toiletries and cleanliness.
- Bedrooms must be equipped with television and a radio/alarm clock or a media system that incorporates these functions. A fully stocked refreshment tray and bedside light is also required.
- Each bedroom should have the ability to connect to the internet by modem, cable, or Wi-Fi.

Decorative Standards

- A high standard of decoration must apply throughout the venue.
- Other Facilities
- The facility for private dining must be available.
- The environment must be conducive to business meetings and learning.
- Dedicated support staff must be available throughout the day and evening to deal with clients needs.
- 24-hour staffing must be provided when clients are on site.

- Office support or a dedicated business centre must be available to provide facilities for faxing, photocopying and use of memory sticks, all of which may be chargeable.

Environment

- An environmental policy must be in place and evidence produced as to its effect.
- Members are encouraged to market their 'green' credentials.

Health & Safety

- A H&S plan should be in place.
- Training in first aid and in the use of fire fighting appliances should be provided and a defined percentage of trained staff on site at any one time. Evidence of this will be required.
- Hygiene audits are to be undertaken and must be demonstrable with evidence supplied of the latest report.

General Conditions

- Members will commit to participating whenever possible in the booking referral system.
- Rates must be available for a fully inclusive residential/day delegate package
- All staff will be professionally presented and be easily recognisable by the customer. This should also include ease of contact at management level. Staff training and attitude should be customer focused.
- As a business environment it is essential that there is at least one terminal with free high-speed internet access. It is also the goal of the consortium to make internet access free and available to all. Should charges be applied for this service they must be clearly displayed to the customer.
- The exterior of the building and grounds (where you have control) are well maintained. Lighting to be appropriate to assist in the safety and comfort of the customer.
- There should be evidence of an active staff training programme and investment in the team. Attainment of Investors in People is preferable
- Members must display their Venues of Excellence membership plaque at the entrance to their property and any Venues of Excellence collateral prominent in the main reception area.
- Payment of annual fees to be made by 31 July each year, or member's property will not appear in printed materials for that year.
- Membership of the Group relates to the individual property not to group ownership. In some circumstances, groups may wish to join and may do so as individual properties.
- It is expected that the centre will embrace a strategy for Corporate Responsibility