

Specification for Secretariat and Conference organisation services for the Oxford Farming Conference

Background

The Oxford Farming Conference (The Conference) is one of the leading international conferences on the future of agriculture. Taking place early in January every year The Conference sets the agenda for the year ahead for an entire industry. Looking strategically at global and local issues affecting the UK's agribusiness, farming, rural and food economies The Conference seeks to make these known to a wide farming industry audience. Its speakers are of the highest caliber, including leaders from the agricultural industry worldwide, the heads of international food retail businesses, international politicians, successful young farmers, and scientists at the forefront of their field. Its audience brings a wealth of innovative ideas and expertise to the debates.

The Conference has extended its reach from the main event in January to include a summer Arable Conference at the June Cereals Event, The Conference /RASE Science and Innovation Award, active support of young people via The Conference scholars' programme, annual market research and online streaming of The Conference.

The Conference is designed and run by The Conference Council (The Council) of ten members (who are also directors of the Conference), and its expert secretariat, as a team. The Council Members are drawn from a range of agricultural, agribusiness and food industry areas. Members serve for three years and are replaced in rotation. A marketing consultant supports the PR and Marketing activities of the conference.

The aims and objectives of the Charity as stated in the governing documents are broad and, whilst mainly educational, go beyond the principal activity of running a successful Annual Conference.

The OFC is a charity and within its scope the Directors have resolved to extend key services for tender. Tenders are being sought for provision of secretarial services and delivering the conference for a period of 5 years. The event is held the same second week in January each year. The 2017 Oxford Farming Conference will be held on 3rd, 4th and 5th January 2017.

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The OFC requirement Secretariat and Conference organisation summary

Schedule 1 - Duties of the Secretariat

The following is a guide to the duties of the secretariat, whilst extensive, it may not be exhaustive. Other duties may be required at the request of Council.

“To provide a level of support to the Council to enable it to achieve its objectives to look ahead strategically at global and local issues affecting the UK’s agribusiness, farming, rural and food economies and to make these known to a wide farming industry audience. Creating, promoting and operating a successful Conference is the foundation of this objective”.

In practice the role splits into 3 parts: -

Council Secretarial Duties,

Event management, organising and delivering the conference

Supporting other initiatives

1. Council secretarial duties

1.1 Year Round Administration

- To agree the diary of Council meetings (usually 6-8 a year), notify Council members, issue agenda, organise venue, refreshments and accommodation (*in recent years, most meetings are held at the Farmers Club, London often beginning at 1pm, and may be followed occasionally at 7pm by a dinner*)
- To attend meetings, take notes, draft and circulate minutes and monitor agreed actions
- To act as a focal point for all correspondence and to respond to this communication promptly - via email, phone, post and fax
- To ensure Council members are kept abreast of any relevant news and information
- To pay bills and bank receipts in the dedicated Conference bank account
- To maintain the day-to-day financial records (these are currently held on SAGE accounting software) (working with the honorary treasurer) and including preparation and submission of VAT returns
- Production of regular financial reports for the Council meetings
- To maintain records and archives of Conference and Council matters as may be necessary to both achieve legal, Charity Commission requirements and fiscal compliance, as well as recording the Conference's history
- To provide a dedicated telephone line and telephone contact at reasonable hours 9am to 5.30 pm and from 8.30 am to 7pm during November and December when the main bookings take place). Apart from the key November and December period, this is not a full-time job for any individual and can be run in conjunction with other functions run by the appointed secretariat
- To arrange and convene other meetings as may be necessary - for instance, each year at least one meeting takes place with selected Council members and main contractors in Oxford
- To maintain a current list of Council members

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- To update the history of the Conference
- Administration of the appropriate procedures relating to the appointment of new directors

2. Event management: organising and delivering the Conference

2.1. Promoting the Conference

- Maintaining and building (drawing on the contacts of Council and Patrons particularly) a database of potential attendees to the event adding new names to whom the Conference may be promoted
- Building an e-mail database of potential attendees to the event
- To ensure that all copyright remains vested with the Council for work undertaken by the secretariat and by any third party contracts, paid or voluntary
- Drafting the Conference programme - with input from Council members and honorary advisers with the appropriate skills
- Ensuring promotion timelines are met
- Working closely with the Communications and Marketing Advisor

2.1. Preparing for the Conference

The secretariat is responsible for:

- Booking the various conference venues - Exam Schools, accommodation, etc
- Booking and liaising with caterers
- Liaison with speakers to ensure their papers and presentations are submitted in the correct format and by the pre-arranged deadline and confirm their travel arrangements
- Liaison with: -
 - Existing and potential Patrons
 - Existing and potential sponsors (including sponsors of scholars) to agree sponsorship packages
 - The relevant staff at each venue. (will require a number of visits to Oxford)
 - Organisations holding Fringe events/breakfasts
 - Exhibitors
 - The Royal Office regarding the attendance of HRH Princess Ann the honorary patron of the conference.
- Booking AV requirements and managing the long-term contract with AV suppliers
- Gathering the documentation for the delegate pack
- Handling all enquiries regarding the Conference during the promotion period and ensure there is sufficient communications/administrator capacity in the team to handle more than one incoming 'phone call at a time, plus voicemail back-up
- Administering and recording ticket sales with the online booking system.
- Managing databases that result from the online booking system, carrying out annual cleansing and testing of collected master database to prepare for "e news"
- Reporting sales progress on a weekly basis by e-mail to Council members.
- Ensuring all monies are banked promptly within 24 hours of receipt
- Be responsible for all financial transactions via Sage including issue of VAT invoices to delegates, sponsors, patrons etc

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- Reconciliation of payments received by credit card, BACS and cheque, plus follow-up on potential bad debts
- Payment of purchase invoices as and when received/authorised
- Preparation of the accounts to trial balance
- Having staff available throughout the Christmas & New Year break (excluding Christmas Day and Boxing Day) to handle last minute enquiries from delegates, speakers, contractors or venues.

2.2. Managing the Conference

During the Conference the secretariat will:

- Be on site from the morning of day one and to be on call via mobile 'phone continuously throughout the conference
- Ensure Council members and honorary staff are briefed on proceedings
- Staff the Secretary's office within the Examination Schools from 7 30am to 6.00 pm throughout the Conference
- Provide at least two administrative staff to ensure cover from 7am to 6pm
- Attend all functions to oversee and provide feedback for future planning sessions
- Continue to liaise with college authorities, and particularly the staff of the Examination Schools and Oxford Union
- Act as a focal point for feedback from Council and delegates in relation to the performance of contractors, etc
- Oversee the front of house operations
- Manage any minor issues in a way that they do not become major crises
- Liaise with speakers, their PAs, assistants, etc and ensuring their smooth arrival and departure
- Liaise with the President regarding arrangements for attendance
- Coordinating feedback from delegates via "mail chimp survey" or other digital means

3 Supporting other events

3.1 Cereals Event*

The secretariat is responsible for:

- Liaison with Panel members including provision of initial invitation, brief outline of the programme, details of requirements and travel arrangements etc
- Attendance on site for 2 days to assist with the Panel sessions
- Provision of two staff to help facilitate floor debate (handling of roving microphones) etc
- Break down of exhibit etc

3.1 Scholars and Emerging leaders

The secretariat is responsible for:

- Coordination / corresponding with both of these groups for the conference.
- Organisation and support for the scholars exchange program with the DLG, including travel arrangements.

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- Keeping a register / data base of scholars and emerging leaders

4. Extension of the secretariat role to be considered

4.1 Coordination of conference sponsorship

The current approach to raising sponsorship for the conference is unsustainable and places unreasonable demands on the director coordinating. It is possible that a specialist fundraiser could be engaged in the future with secretariat supporting that person. If your business has in house skills with fundraising capabilities, please refer to this in the tender, although this work will be a separate tender and contract.

5. Reporting

The secretariat / conference organiser to report on time per month and key outputs.

OFC wishes to appoint a provider who can demonstrate a high level of service in providing secretarial services to the council and conference and innovation in delivering the Oxford Farming Conference.

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The tender

The tendering process is anticipated as follows:

1. Tendering invitations issued Tuesday 18th October 2016.
2. Any questions submitted by Friday 28th October 2016 in one document to OFC Secretariat Ann Newbold ann@farm-smart.co.uk
3. Responses to questions supplied by Friday 4th November 2016.
4. Completed tender submissions with full costings, completed application form and CV of key staff to OFC Secretariat Ann Newbold ann@farm-smart.co.uk by Tuesday 16th November 2016 at 12 noon.
5. Companies advised whether they have been shortlisted to go forward in the selection process on Friday 25th November.
6. Shortlisted companies tendering will be encouraged to attend OFC 2017 to review the conference and incorporate suggestions for changes into their presentation at interview (at own cost).
7. Interviews to be held at The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, London week commencing 23rd January (exact date and time to be confirmed if shortlisted).
8. Site visits, secondary interviews and competency tests with key staff February 2017.
9. 1st March 2017 appointment of new secretariat and conference organiser.
10. 15th March 2017 handover process from Farmsmart begins.

Applicants should note that they will be interviewed by a panel comprising Directors of the Conference and tenders will be assessed on a range of criteria including: -

- The experience of the people delivering the services (CV's of key people will need to be provided).
- The size of the providers employed team and contingency in event of key staff departure.

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- Systems adopted and used to simplify the services provided.
- The company trading position and previous years accounts.
- Demonstration of innovation.
- Other services that can be offered; printing, IT etc and relationships that the provider can lever.
- Relevant experience.
- Examples of delivery of key events.
- The ability to work sympathetically with a voluntary council of conference directors.