

STAFFING

Staff Selection

Finding the right personnel for a project such as a major international summit is as important as it is difficult. Poor staffing creates additional work and frustrations, and can dangerously undermine morale. Unless this is the second or third major conference being organized, with experienced individuals from whom to choose, it is impossible for the Executive Director to be certain that everyone selected on the basis of aptitude alone will meet requirements.

Summit organizers can, and should, cast a wide net for the best people, including loans from other host government departments (especially from their offices in the summit location), and persons from other levels of government (province/ state/ municipal). The principal sources of staff will be non-government contracts with self-employed experts and support from temporary assistance agencies.

Candidates must be very carefully selected for their aptitude for project work of this nature. It is critical that staff be flexible, strong team players, who are well-organized and perform well under pressure.

Acquiring the first-time summit team can be a very difficult and frustrating task, when dealing with the complexity and time-consuming character of most government staffing and contracting rules. Summit organizers must be aware that the bureaucracy can slow down the process. In some instances, there is no "time" available for these delays. This underlines the emphasis that should be placed on early and accurate forecasting of staff requirements.

A conscious effort should be made to hire staff locally if the summit is out of the capital region. Obviously, most of the core staff will come from the capital; however, the large numbers of support staff and site office personnel (if required) should come from the summit city.

The reasons are both budgetary and political. Locally hired staff do not incur travel and temporary accommodation costs; their local knowledge makes them more efficient and effective than out-of-town staff. Local governments will be more helpful, and the general public more supportive, if they know that the summit is making an impact on the job market in their city and bringing economic benefit.

Host governments and organizations might consider developing and maintaining inventories of persons with experience across the range of associated disciplines, including those outside of the government, and ensure that same personnel continue to gain the relevant experience.