

# PATHWAYS to LEADERSHIP AT BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

## Conference 101 Guide and Itinerary Template

### Overview

This Conference 101 Guide and Itinerary Template is designed for individuals attending multi-day professional conferences but contains useful information and tools for any professional event. Professional conferences are an exciting opportunity to:

- Make professional connections and grow your network
- Learn about your own interests and goals
- Expand your industry knowledge
- Develop new skills
- Build your resume
- Practice public speaking
- Meet potential mentors

This guide and template will help you get the most out of professional conferences and make your experience as smooth, stress-free, and enjoyable as possible. Feel free to download a copy and alter it based on the event you are attending.

### Daily Itinerary Template

#### Where to Look for Upcoming Conferences

- Association communications (i.e. newsletters and social media posts)
- Word of mouth (i.e. colleagues and classmates)

- Professional events

*Note that conference dates are typically set 1-3 years in advance and registration for most conferences opens months in advance; if you plan to seek accommodation near the conference, also note that hotels fill up fast. Planning ahead is key!*

## Determining Projected Costs

Before attending a conference, having a strong sense of your projected costs is important, especially if you seek sponsorship from an employer, university, or other organization. Expenses to consider as you build out a budget:

- The number of days you are planning on attending
- The cost of your accommodation (large conferences often work with hotels to reserve blocks of rooms at discounted prices; this will be listed on the conference website, if available)
- Any available discounts (i.e. if you are presenting, a student, etc.)
- Transportation costs (airfare/rail, gas/tolls/parking, etc.)
- Food costs
- Any additional anticipated costs

*Scholarships are often available for attending major conferences, such as the American Library Association Annual Conference. Visit the specific conference websites for more information.*

## Questions to Ask Your Sponsor (i.e. an employer, university, etc.)

- What is the process for applying for sponsorship to conferences and other professional events at this organization?
- Are there any travel and conference policies to review before registering?
- Which expenses will be paid upfront versus reimbursed?
- Do conference days count as workdays or vacation days?
- If driving distance: is there a company car available for borrowing?
- If staying in a hotel: am I expected to put down a personal credit/debit card for incidentals (a deposit between \$50-\$150 that will be returned to you at the end of your stay if no alterations are made to the room).
- Will special ticketed events be covered?
- What expectations do you have for me as a conference attendee?
  - What information should I bring back to share with the larger organization, and how would you like me to share that information?
  - Are there specific sessions you would like me to attend or people you would like me to meet with?

## What to Research in Advance

- Who will be presenting (review the conference schedule and note the sessions you would like to attend and any people you would like to connect with)
- The organization hosting the conference
- Nearby food options
- Nearby tourist attractions
- Reports about previous similar conferences

## What to Expect

At conferences, you should expect long but rewarding days filled with a variety of activities including workshops, panels, and social mixers. You should also anticipate collecting a lot of free merchandise from vendors. In some moments, conferences may feel overwhelming, daunting, and draining. Never fear! Filling out an itinerary in advance will help make your experience as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

## Daily Itinerary Template

### Day 1 (Travel/Arrival)

Activity	Time	Address	Notes
Travel to departure location (i.e. airport, train station)			
Departure			
Arrival			
Travel to hotel			
Check-in at hotel**			
Visit conference site			Pick up attendee badge at registration, get a sense of the building layout and available food options, etc.

**\*\*When you arrive at the hotel, please remember that you will be asked to put your credit/debit card down for incidentals (typically around \$50). This deposit will be returned to you at the end of your stay if no alterations are made to the room.**

### Day 2 (Conference)

Activity	Time	Address	Notes
Travel to conference site			The Conference organizers may

			provide a free shuttle bus to the conference site – see conference website for more details.
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[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Lunch*

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

If a session block doesn't have any relevant sessions, you may elect to explore the exhibition hall (if relevant) or have a networking coffee instead. See the Conference Networking 101 section below or the Networking 101 Guide for more information.

### Day 3 (Conference + Travel/Departure)

Activity	Time	Address	Notes
Travel to the Convention Center			Leave suitcases with bellhop or bring to

			convention site (if they have a free bag check) to avoid checking out late and being charged.
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[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] *Lunch*

[Time] *Session Block*

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] Session Block

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

[Time] Session Block

Sessions of Interest	
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]
[Session title]	[Room]

Activity	Time	Address	Notes
Retrieve bags			
Travel to departure location			
Departure			
Arrival			
Travel home			

## Appendix

### Checklists

#### *Pre-Conference Checklist*

- ✓ If your attendance will be sponsored by your employer or another organization, review any relevant travel and conference policies and receive confirmation of approval to attend
- ✓ Download/print out hotel/transport tickets
- ✓ Review relevant materials (emails, conference website, schedule, etc.)

#### *Conference Checklist*

- ✓ Attend a range of programs and activities
- ✓ Arrive early to programs and activities
- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Be engaged
- ✓ Be respectful
- ✓ Have an open mind
- ✓ Exchange business cards with at least two new professional connections
- ✓ Hold onto financial receipts for reimbursement, if relevant
- ✓ Check your email regularly for communications throughout the event

#### *Post-Conference Checklist*

- ✓ Follow up via email with professional connections
- ✓ Submit receipts for reimbursement from your sponsor (if relevant)
- ✓ Complete the conference attendee feedback form (if the conference organizers share one)
- ✓ Reflect
  - What went well?
  - What didn't go well?
  - What did you learn?
  - What are your next steps?

#### **Pro-tips:**

- ✓ Wear comfortable shoes and lots of layers (convention centers are typically big and temperatures can vary in different rooms)
- ✓ Take notes (you will be taking in a *lot* of information and it's impossible to remember it all)
- ✓ Bring a water bottle
- ✓ Don't forget to eat - plan meals/snacks to minimize stress on busy days

- ✓ Review the presenters for various sessions of interest in advance on the conference website/app
  - If there is a session you are unable to attend but interested in learning more about, consider scheduling an informal networking coffee with the speakers (see the Conference Networking 101 section below or the Networking 101 Guide for more information)
- ✓ If spontaneous networking and/or setting up a networking coffee sound nerve-wracking, two easy ways to make connections are: go up to a presenter and share your reflections on their program or talk to your neighbor at an event
- ✓ If you aren't enjoying a session, you can always move to another one midway through - the itinerary above is designed for you to pre-plan the sessions *and* back-up sessions you would like to attend

### Resources for Introverts

- [How Introverts Can Make the Most of Conferences](#)
- [Getting the Most Out of a Professional Conference](#)

### Conference Networking 101

When preparing your itinerary, you may be interested in particular sessions (topically or because of who is leading them). You might consider setting up an informal networking coffee with the speakers during the conference or a post-conference Zoom meeting. You can also review the Networking 101 Guide for additional tips.

### Sample Networking Email Template 1

Subject: Introductions and [Conference name/year]

Hi [name],

I hope you are doing well. My name is [name] and I [briefly share who you are and what you do]. It's great to e-meet you!

In [month], I will be [attending/presenting] at [conference name]. I would love to connect with you in [location of conference] to learn more about [tailor this to your interests/intentions – maybe you want to hear more about their work, a specific topic they are experts on, etc.].

My schedule on [day of conference] [morning/afternoon] is flexible if you are available to meet me for coffee. [X] coffee shop is located near the conference center and could be a convenient place to meet.

Let me know what you think, and hope to see you soon in [location of conference].

Kind regards,

**[Name] ([pronouns]) | [Title]**  
[Affiliated organization, if relevant]

## Sample Networking Email Template 2

Subject: Following Up – [conference name]

Hi [name],

I hope you are doing well. My name is [name] and I [briefly share your role at BPL and what you do].

I really enjoyed your “[title of session]” [panel/vendor table/event] at [name of Conference]. [Share something specific you took away from the session]. I would love to connect with you to learn more about your work and potential opportunities to collaborate.

Let me know if you’d like to set up a time to chat in the next few months and I can put something on the calendar.

Kind regards,

**[Name] ([pronouns]) | [Title]**  
[Affiliated organization, if relevant]

## Additional Tools & Resources

- [The Benefits of Networking](#)
- [Networking for Success](#)
- [Networking Outside of Your Comfort Zone](#)
- [How To Keep A Conversation Going](#)
- [Ask Better Questions to Build Better Connections](#)
- [Follow Up Email Templates](#)
- [The Art of Active Listening](#)
- ["If you think you know everything, you can't learn anything"](#)
- [Adaptive Communication](#)