

How to Bid on a USCF National Event (updated Oct. 2006)

Hosting a USCF National Event is a great way to help promote chess in your local area. The bidding process is open to all recognized USCF affiliates. The official deadlines are listed in Chess Life and also on the USCF website at <<http://www.uschess.org>>.

The Bidding Process

The USCF office main selects the sites and handles all the details for many of the major National events. However, there are many tournaments that the USCF encourages local chess clubs and state affiliates to submit proposals to organize.

In fact, the USCF office relies heavily on bids submitted by our affiliates. The majority of events on the USCF calendar are awarded based on bids by our local and state affiliates.

We believe that our method encourages more activity at the grass roots level and works to promote chess in more areas of the country.

Who Can Submit a Bid?

The USCF office will review bids only from recognized USCF affiliates, or from groups working in cooperation with a USCF affiliate.

USCF National Events, are major tournaments requiring a great deal of volunteer effort. Smaller groups are encouraged to contact their state organizations for support as they prepare their bidding materials.

A letter from your state organization, while not essential, is a strong indication that your group has the necessary volunteer base to organize a successful event.

Parts of a National Tournament Proposal

A bid on a USCF National Event is a statement that your group wants to work in partnership with the USCF national office to organize a chess event in your local area.

If your proposal is accepted, then your group will be held accountable for all the things you promised to do in your bid. If your group wishes to make changes later, you will need the permission of the USCF office.

A successful bid will include all of the following:

- * A draft hotel or site contract
- * A sample budget
- * A complete description of your group's plans for the event, including time controls, number of rounds, prize fund, side events, and publicity
- * A statement of the financial arrangements your group is offering
- * Names of volunteers, staff, and TDs (including the Chief TD's resume)
- * Brochures from the hotel showing the space layout and dimensions

The Hotel Contract

Many smaller groups shy away from bidding because they feel intimidated about finding a site. Most USCF National Events are held at major hotels, but alternate sites include local schools, colleges, or community centers.

Regardless of the type of site you plan to use, a draft site contract is a major part of your proposal. The site contract should specify the type of meeting space available, the charges (if any) for using the meeting space, and any other special requirements for your event.

When you meet with the hotel or potential site manager, be sure to stress that you are collecting information for a proposal. You do not want to enter into a final agreement until you have been awarded the bid

For tips on how to speak to hotels, see the section "A Quick Course in Hotel Negotiations" near the end of this booklet.

Remember: At this point, do not sign the site contract or commit to using the meeting space.

A Sample Budget

You should think of your proposal as a type of business plan. Any good business needs a budget, and so your sample budget is a very important part of your overall bid.

Your budget should include an estimate of the expected revenues for the event. It should also include an estimate of the overall expenses, including the prize fund and staffing costs.

Don't forget to include publicity, including ads in Chess Life and a general mailing to the players. Chess on the Internet is gaining popularity, and so you should include the costs of web coverage in your bid.

Remember that all related sources of income from side events and sales of commemorative items are considered to be tournament income.

A reasonable sample budget for a small event might look something like this:

Revenues

Entry Fees (200 @ \$25) \$5,000

Side Events \$1,000

Bookseller fee \$250

Sponsorship \$500

Room rebates \$1,000

\$7,750

Expenses

Prizes (trophies) (\$1,000)

Prizes (side events) (\$250)

TD fees (\$2,000)

Site rental (\$2,000)

Advertising - Chess Life (\$500)

Advertising - flyers (\$750)

Printing - program booklet (\$250)

Rating fees (\$150)

Internet coverage (\$500)

Misc. (\$100)

(\$7,500)

Net Profit \$250

Less USCF guarantee (\$200)

Organizer share \$50

Of course the sample budget for each USCF National Event will be somewhat different, and will depend greatly on the type of event.

Your sample budget is important because, if your bid is accepted, it forms the basis for your agreement with the USCF office. If your budget includes \$1,000 for trophies, then that is what the

USCF will expect (or allow) you to spend.

Therefore, it is in your group's best interest to include as much information about your plans as possible. By including the details now, you avoid confusion later. The sample budget listed above could be improved by giving more specific information about spending in each of the general categories. A player per head fee should also be included for payment

To the US Chess Federation. Sometimes Actual financial reports from previous USCF National Events are available from the USCF office.

Names of Volunteers, Staff, and TDs

A good proposal should include lists of available volunteers, paid staff, and the tournament directors. For most USCF National Events, the Chief TD must be at least an Assistant National Tournament Director (ANTD). A National Tournament Director (NTD) is preferred.

The USCF office reserves the right to review your final staffing list.

Plans for Your Event

Most USCF National Events follow the same pattern from year to year in terms of format, number of rounds, eligible players, and a host of other specific requirements.

Some general information is listed later in this brochure. More details can also be found in the Tournament Life Announcements (TLAs) for previous years' events.

However, in your proposal your group is free to suggest a variety of changes, new side events, and related activities. As the local partner, you know what types of chess activities the players in your area like the most.

The Statement of Financial Arrangements

Previously, most USCF National Events were run as simple partnerships, with the USCF office and the local group sharing all profit or loss on an equal (50/50) basis.

USCF office is in favor of a flat fee or per player fee arrangements. Under these terms, the local organizer offers either a fixed amount or a small per player amount (e.g., between \$2 and \$10) as a guarantee to the USCF.

Why the switch? Flat fee or per player fee arrangements help the USCF's budgeting process, because they remove the element of risk and offer a small positive return on our tournaments. Local organizers should like them too, because they allow more of the profits to stay with the local group. Local groups will be more motivated to find sponsorship if they know most of the money will remain in their local communities.

Also, flat fee or per player fee terms tend to encourage the full reporting of all on-site tournament revenues, because the local group gets to keep any extra profits. Full reporting is still important, however, so that the USCF office gets an accurate picture of how large the event really was. Remember that all related revenue sources (e.g., side events, concession fees, sales of commemorative items, sponsorship) are considered to be tournament income for reporting purposes.

Brochures from the Hotel and Local Community

Your group has one very important advantage over the USCF office when it comes to evaluating your intended playing site: You've seen it, and we (in most cases) have not!

The USCF office cannot evaluate your playing site without clear and accurate information about the size of the rooms and other information about the hotel or facility. In most cases, the hotel will have a variety of free literature that describes its meeting space in great detail. Be sure to include

this information with your proposal.

As a rule of thumb, the USCF office suggest that you plan on:

15 sq. ft. per player for a large Swiss
20 sq. ft. per player for an invitational tournament plus additional space
for skittles, TD room, concession room, and other activities.

The Approval Process

Once you have your bidding materials prepared, the next step is to send them to the USCF office. Bids for most USCF National Events should be sent to the USCF, P.O. Box 3967, Attn: Joan DuBois, Crossville, TN 38557 or email them to: jdubois@uschess.org

Bids for National Scholastic Events should be forwarded to the USCF Scholastic Director. The deadlines for submission are printed each month in Chess Life and also appear on the USCF website at <<http://www.uschess.org>>.

Flashy notebooks, binders or multi-colored tabs are not necessary, but clean 8 1/2" x 11" typed pages are a must!

Note: You may send your proposal via email, however please also follow with a mailed hard copy.. The USCF office accepts no responsibility for electronic submissions, which often require additional formatting. Once your bid is received, it will be forwarded to members of one of the USCF's volunteer committees for further evaluation. The USCF Executive Director will make the final decision, based in part on the committee's input.

Bids are considered to be confidential until a decision is announced. Successful bids are public knowledge and may be distributed to future bidders; unsuccessful bids are not circulated. If your bid is approved, you will be notified by the USCF staff person in charge of your event.

Five Secrets of Success for USCF National Events

1. Location. Be sure your intended site is in a safe local area with easy access to public transportation, including air travel.

Remember: Many of your players will be traveling from outside the local area. For larger events, this means you need to be sure you can accommodate non-local players. For smaller events, a local player base is essential.

2. Playing area. Your players will spend the majority of their time in the playing area, so be sure that your hotel contract specifies that the space is available on a 24 hours per day basis.

3. Book and equipment concession. An on-site bookseller is a big hit with the players, and so it is also an important quality-of-event issue.

4. Entry fees and registrations. In most cases, the local organizer is responsible for the financial arrangement for the tournament, including entries. In most cases, side event fees should be collected on-site only, not in advance.

5. Food Service. Chess events often have playing schedules that don't mesh well with the outside world. Will players be able to find food service for lunch or dinner following their rounds? Be sure to confirm with the sales manager that the hotel restaurant will be open at the right times.

A Quick Course in Hotel Negotiations

Hotels make their money through a combination of meeting space rentals, room-night rentals, and restaurant/catering services. A large convention or meeting (i.e., chess tournament) is an opportunity for the hotel to make money from all three of these sources.

As a bidder on a USCF National Event, you are offering the hotel the opportunity to make money. You are in a strong negotiating position, so use your leverage to work out a fair arrangement for both sides.

Remember, the hotel will always try to offer terms that favor it! Experienced organizers recognize this and work to improve the hotel's initial offer.

Suppose for a moment that you are offering the hotel the opportunity to host a major USCF National Event. The hotel may try to offer you a flat rate for the use of its meeting space. A flat rate may sound good at first, but it is usually the least attractive type of offer. Flat rate terms allow the hotel to make money from both the meeting space and the number of room-nights sold. Under these terms, the tournament gets nothing in return for providing the hotel with a substantial amount of business. Unless the quoted rental is very reasonable, it is best to try to renegotiate the contract.

The hotel may suggest a sliding scale based on the number of room-nights used by your players. For example, for a room block of 600 room-nights, the hotel may ask for:

550 room-nights free meeting
or more space
500-549 \$500
400-499 \$1,000
Less than 400 \$3,000

Be wary about how the hotel defines its scale. The term room-night refers to one room rental for one night, not the same room over consecutive nights. When you set up a block of 200 rooms over three nights, your total is 600 room-nights. A good sliding scale is one that counts total room-nights sold, not rooms per night.

A sliding scale is the most common hotel offer and it is usually better than a flat rate, if the scale does not leave too much financial exposure in the face of poor turn-out.

Some hotels ask for a flat rate and combine it with an offer of a rebate or commission against each room-night to offset the meeting space rental. Common rebates range from \$3 to \$10 per room-night.

Rebate offers are more likely when the host site is a convention center that does not also have sleeping rooms. In such cases, the convention center offers a flat rate and you must seek to cover the cost by finding overflow hotels in the nearby area. Because the overflow hotels are not providing the valuable meeting space themselves, they should be more willing to offer you a rebate against their room rates.

Finally, if you are fortunate enough to find a hotel that offers you complimentary meeting space right from the start, just be careful of other hidden charges. Be sure to carefully read the agreement thoroughly.

Other Hotel Tips

Experienced organizers know that most hotels will provide extra services, but only if they are asked to do so.

Most hotels will provide complimentary rooms based on the number of room-nights sold. The industry average is one comp room for every 50 room-nights sold.

Most hotels will also provide organizers with a limited number of rooms at a special staff rate that is \$10-\$20 less than the negotiated convention rate. Staff rate rooms can help stretch your comp rooms and keep total costs down.

The total room block is the number of rooms set aside for your players at the special convention rate. The hotel will often set a cut-off date for players to make their reservations at this special rate. Some hotels will try to set an early cut-off date such as 30 days or more. The industry standard is 14 days, and you should specify this point in the contract. Also, the tournament room block should receive credit for players who arrive a day early or stay a day or two later.

Remember to get a printout of the post-convention report showing the total number of roomnights credited to the tournament, especially if there is a chance that the event may have to pay a fee for the meeting space.

Tables with appropriate cloths, and water service, will likely be provided at no cost, but only if you ask! Remember, the hotel is providing the meeting space based on your total room-night and food service business. If your event is large, these nuisance charges should be waived.

Special Guidelines for the USCF Convention

The USCF Convention is held each year in conjunction with the U.S. Open. Organizers who intend to bid on a future U.S. Open must be aware of the following special requirements.

Delegates Meeting (2 days): Requires set-up for 140 people, classroom style, with a head table and raised dias for the USCF governance officers. Microphones and audiovisual equipment are needed.

Executive Board Meetings (3 days): Requires a small room with school room style setup for 50 people, plus a center table for the USCF governance officers. Light refreshments should be available.

Ballot Count (1 day): Requires a small room with school room style seating for 100 people, with a head table and microphone.

Workshops (3 days): The first several days of the USCF Convention feature numerous workshops and committee meetings (approx. 20 in all). These meetings are held 3-4 at a time, each with school room style seating for 50 people.

President's Reception (1 day): Held on the evening of the first Friday of the U.S. Open. Seating is restaurant style (no tableware) for 100 people. Light refreshments, cash bar.

Annual Awards Banquet (1 day): Held on the first day of the Delegates Meeting. Seating is buffet style for approx. 100 people. A platform and podium with microphone should be available.

Denker and Polgar Reception (1 day): Casual reception for approx. 100 people. Light refreshments.(if sponsorship is available)

Invitational Events

The USCF office also solicits bids for some of our invitational events,. In some cases, the USCF sets the upper limit for spending and covers all the costs for these events. Special guidelines are available for these events, and organizers are encouraged to contact the U.S. office prior to preparing a bid for these types of tournaments.

National Scholastic Events

Some USCF National Events have been designated as "National Scholastic Events." These tournaments must follow a special set of guidelines – please refer to the Scholastic Rules and Regulations posted on the USCF website.

The events that must follow the scholastic guidelines include:

USCF National Events

The following is a brief synopsis of each USCF National Event, with information about the size of the tournament, site requirements, prizes, and entry fees.

Events are listed in roughly chronological order.

Junior Chess Congress

This event was introduced in 1994. The Junior Chess Congresses could be regional events (e.g., East, West, North, South).

Dates: Martin Luther King weekend in January
Format: 5-SS, 6-SS, or 7-SS with moderate time controls
Site: 3,000 to 5,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Trophies
EF: \$35-\$55

U.S. Amateur Team Championship

This event has grown to four sections (e.g., East, West, Mid-West, South). USAT East is the largest, drawing between 200-250 teams. Team West draws between 60-100 teams. Teams South and Mid-West draw between 20-80 teams. A team consists of four players plus an optional alternate, with the average team rating below 2200.

Dates: Presidents Day weekend in February
Format: 5-SS or 6-SS with slow time controls (50/2 preferred)
Site: East: 24,000 sq. ft.
West: 10,000 sq. ft.
South: 5,000 sq. ft.
Mid-West: 5,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Trophies, plaques, chess clocks, possibly other non-cash prizes
EF: \$70-\$120 per team. Players without teams should be allowed to enter at the site to form ad-hoc teams.
Playoff: Each regional organizer is expected to assist their local winners with details of the U.S. Amateur Team Championship Playoff.
Traditionally, the USCF has assumed the full cost of organizing the playoff.
National Elementary Championship, National Junior High Championship, National High School Championship

National Open

This event draws between 800-1,000 players.
Dates: Late Spring/early Summer
Site: 17,000 to 30,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Minimum \$30,000 guaranteed. The winner receives a replica of the Edmondson Cup.
Entry: \$85-\$125

U.S. Amateur Championship

This event has grown to four sections (e.g., East, West, North, South). The East usually draws between 150-250 players. The West draws 90-150 players. The North and South are smaller events.

Note: The U.S. Amateur Championship is an individual event.
Date: Memorial Day weekend
Format: 6-SS open to players below 2200.
Site: 2,000 - 5,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Trophies, plaques, possibly other non-cash awards.
EF: \$30-\$40
Playoff: The regional organizers are expected to contribute equally to the cost of the official U.S. Amateur Championship Playoff, held 2-3 weeks after the regional events.
In recent year's the playoff has been held over the Internet.

U.S. Amateur 3-Player Team Championship

This new event is similar to the established U.S. Amateur Team championships, except that teams consist of three players. The average team rating must be under 2200.

Dates: May through November (flexible)

Format: 5-SS or 6-SS

Site: 5,000 to 10,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: Trophies, clocks, plaques, or other non-cash prizes

EF: \$70-\$90 per team

National Team Championship

This new event is open to teams of four players. There are no rating restrictions (i.e., all-master teams are possible and encouraged).

Dates: May through November (flexible)

Format: 5-SS or 6-SS

Site: 5,000 to 10,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: Trophies, clocks, plaques, or other non-cash prizes

EF: \$80-\$120 per team

U.S. Cadet Championship

This event is an invitational tournament for the eight top-rated U.S. players under the age of 16.

Dates: Early Summer (flexible). The event must be held prior to the U.S. Open.

Format: 8-RR with time control of 40/90, G/60. The USCF office selects the players and handles the invitations.

In previous years, the USCF has offered a fixed contribution to the tournament. The local organizers are responsible for the balance of the costs. No travel stipends are offered to the players for this event.

U.S. Open

The U.S. Open is held in conjunction with the USCF Convention. Sufficient space must be available for the various workshops and meetings. See the section marked "Special Guidelines for the USCF Convention."

This event is a one-section open Swiss, which draws between 500 and 700 players.

Dates: Usually the first two weeks of August

Site: 20,000 sq. ft. for the main playing hall

Format: 9-SS or 12-SS, with one round per day. Multiple schedules are encouraged.

Prizes: Minimum \$30,000 guaranteed

EF: \$85-\$150

Denker Tournament of High School Champions

This event is limited to the age-appropriate top high school players from each of the USCF's 52 state affiliates. The USCF is responsible for the player selection process.

The event has been held in conjunction with the U.S. Open, but bids for other venues will be considered.

Dates: Summer (usually with the U.S. Open)

Format: 5-SS, with one round per day. A special set of guidelines exists for this event.

Site: 2,500 to 5,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: \$1,000 in scholarship prizes provided by the USCF. Financial support from GM Arnold Denker.

EF: \$0 (invitational event).

U.S. Action (G/30) Championship

This event usually attracts 50-150 players.

Dates: Summer (flexible)

Format: 10-SS or 11-SS, with a time control of G/30.
Site: 1,200 to 3,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Cash and trophies
EF: \$35-\$100

U.S. G/60 Championship

This event usually draws between 50-150 players
Dates: Summer (flexible)
Format: 7-SS with time control of G/60
Site: 2,000 to 4,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Cash
EF: \$35-\$100

U.S. G/10 & G/15 Championships

These twin events draw between 50-100 players each. The time controls of G/10 and G/15 place these events in the USCF's Quick Chess rating system. These events are often held as side events at other USCF National Events. It is recommended that the two Quick Chess Events be held together in conjunction with a larger event.

Dates: Flexible
Format: 7-SS
Site: 2,500-4,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Cash
EF: \$35-\$80

U.S. Championship and U.S. Women's Championship

These two events have now been combined into one large chess event, often featuring a title sponsor.

The U.S. Championship is an invitational event for the top-rated U.S. players. The usual number of players is between 12 and 16.

The U.S. Women's Championship includes the 10 top-rated female U.S. players.

The USCF office sets the terms and conditions for these events. A special set of bidding guidelines is available.

Dates: Summer or Fall (flexible, but no earlier than June 1).
Format: See special bidding guidelines
Prizes: See special bidding guidelines
EF: \$0 (invitational event)

U.S. Blind Championship

This event is restricted to players who meet the legal definition of blindness. The site must provide access for players with special needs. The expected attendance is 15-30 players.

Date: Summer or Fall (flexible)
Format: 4-SS or 5-SS in one section, with a time control of 40/2. Previous organizers have included meal service in the event schedule.
Site: 1,000 to 3,000 sq. ft.
Prizes: Cash and trophies
EF: \$25-\$40

U.S. Masters Championship

This event is open only to players who have ratings over 2200, or who have ever been so rated, plus a limited number of promising juniors rated over 2000. The usual attendance is 100-150 players.

Dates: Any time not conflicting with other national or regional events (flexible)

Format: 7-SS or 9-SS, in one section (2 sections possible), with a time control of 40/2.

Site: 2,500 to 5,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: \$10,000 to \$15,000 guaranteed. The USCF makes a fixed contribution to the prize fund, and the organizer is responsible for all other expenses.

EF: \$85-\$110; GMs and IMs receive free entry

U.S. Class Championship

This event is a series of class section tournaments, drawing between 200 and 400 players.

Dates: Fall (flexible)

Format: 5-SS or 6-SS divided into multiple sections by rating class.

Site: 5,000-10,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: Suggested Minimum \$10,000 guaranteed

EF: \$90-110-\$100

U.S. Senior Open

This event is restricted to players age 50 and over. The expected attendance is approx. 100 players. In previous years, this event has been held both as a traditional hotel-based Swiss and in conjunction with a special cruise.

Dates: Fall (flexible)

Format: 6-SS or 7-SS, in one section, with a time control of 40/100, with one round per day.

Site: 2,000 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Prizes: Cash and trophies. The winner's name appears on the Alina Markowski trophy, located in the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame and Museum.

EF: \$85 – 110

Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Championship

This event is limited to players enrolled in degree-granting college and graduate study programs.

The team event features teams of four players from the same school.

The expected attendance is 30-40 teams.

The team event is often held in conjunction with a scholastic side event and a Swiss for faculty, advisors, and local adults.

A special set of guidelines exists for this event.

Dates: Last week in December (post-holiday)

Format: A 6-SS, played over four days, with a time control of 50/2.

Site: 2,500 to 5,000 sq. ft. A college location is usually preferred.

Prizes: Cash and trophies

Because many colleges will directly sponsor teams at this event, the prizes are awarded to the schools, not the players. If a team requests a prize to be disbursed directly to one or more players, they must provide written authorization from their faculty advisor.

EF: \$125-\$160 per team

Final Notes

Organizers are encouraged to include alternate dates as part of their bids.

The USCF office strives to avoid date conflicts among the various USCF National Events.

Multiple dates allow greater flexibility in awarding National Events.