

**THE MID-EASTERN REGION, N.M.R.A., INC.**  
**EXECUTIVE CONVENTION HANDBOOK**

1	<u>REVISION HISTORY</u> .....	3
2	<u>INTRODUCTION</u> .....	4
3	<u>MER POLICY AND GUIDELINES</u> .....	5
3.1	Contract Agreement .....	5
3.2	Convention Dates - Policy .....	5
3.3	Locations. ....	5
3.4	Convention Activities .....	5
3.5	Financial - Policy .....	6
3.6	Convention Facilities - Policy... ..	9
3.7	Responsibilities for the MER CAT Team - Policy ... ..	11
3.8	Responsibilities for the Local Convention Committee - Policy .....	11
3.9	Insurance - Policy .....	13
3.10	Contests - Policy .....	14
3.11	Convention Advertising... ..	15
3.12	Final Plans.....	16
3.13	Miscellaneous - Policy... ..	16
4	<u>CONVENTION PLANNING</u> .....	17
4.1	Organization Structure:.....	17
4.2	Personnel Manning.....	20
4.3	Convention Countdown... ..	22
5	<u>REGION CONTEST PLANNING GUIDELINES</u> .....	23
5.1	Contest Room... ..	23
5.2	Lighting.....	23
5.3	Tables.....	23
5.4	Registration .....	23
5.5	Miscellaneous.....	23
5.6	Timing .....	23
6	<u>REGION CLINIC PLANNING GUIDELINES</u> .....	25
6.1	Clinic Rooms... ..	25
6.2	Lighting.....	25
6.3	A-V Equipment .....	25
6.4	Clinicians... ..	25
6.5	Timing .....	25
6.6	Clinician Reimbursement .....	26
7	<u>REQUEST FOR CONVENTION WORKING FUND ADVANCE</u> .....	27
8	<u>CONVENTION STATISTICAL REPORT</u> .....	28
9	<u>CONVENTION STATISTICAL SHEET</u> .....	29
10	<u>CONVENTION FINANCIAL REPORT</u> .....	30
11	<u>MER CONVENTION BANQUET ACTIVITIES</u> .....	31
11.1	The Program... ..	31
12	<u>Convention Contract</u> .....	33

## 1. Revision History.

Original document issued in 1988.

Revised again Spring/Summer 2004, to introduce the CAT Team approach, and clean up cosmetics by making it a true MS Word document.

Revised again: **February 27, 2014**

Revised again: **April 28, 2018**

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This manual has been prepared to be used as a guide for providing for the essential planning and scheduling of conventions for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER), National Model Railroad Association, Inc. (NMRA). It is intended that the Local Convention Committee (LCC) shall use this document as a reflection of the MER policy and as a recommended guide in the organization and the operation for conventions. Because of liability and insurance issues, a LCC must be a recognized entity of the NMRA/MER such as a Division, unless approved otherwise by the MER Board of Directors (BOD).

The MER Executive Convention Chair (ECC) will coordinate each and every MER convention. All of the convention planning, scheduling, facilities, activities and financial arrangements will require the final approval by the MER ECC. The LCC chairman shall be responsible for the detailed organization and operation of the convention.

The LCC shall be responsible for organizing and conducting a convention. The LCC shall act as the host group for the MER convention activities and shall supply the organization and the material support for the activities. Any other activities will be at the discretion of the LCC with prior approval by the MER ECC. LCC key personnel are the Convention Chair and the Convention Manager.

The MER Convention Action Team (“CAT” Team) will provide personnel to execute a number of functions that are common to all conventions, in order to ensure consistent performance and reduce risk of errors. This will include the ECC, Registration, Treasurer, AP/Contest Judging Team, Clinics Coordinator (for help with the LCC Clinics Coordinator).

The LCC’s responsibilities include Open House Layout Tours, nearby Prototype Tours, call board/operating sessions, soliciting modular groups to display & operate (optional), a White Elephant Room (optional), an Auction (optional), and Raffle (optional), and other optional nearby non-rail activities.

Any Division, Club, or Group who desires to host a convention must contact the MER Executive Convention Chairman (ECC) to discuss the plans and to reserve a tentative date for hosting an MER convention.

Any approved convention activity that is carefully planned, has a proper budget, and approval by the MER is still subject to the risk that something can go wrong. In this case, the Region assumes the role of the insurer and accepts the financial loss.

The enclosed document represents the MER policy and Guidelines for all convention operations. Any item not covered in this document must be discussed with the MER ECC.

The phrase(s) “approval or permission by MER”, or similar wording, means the MER BOD.

The plan is essentially that the CAT Team handles the tasks that are repeatable exactly as is at each convention, e.g. Registration, Contest Room, etc. independently of the LCC and that the local team handles the venue- and /or area-specific tasks that require local knowledge, e.g. layout tour open houses. The intent is that the workload on the local people is minimized and that tasks are performed consistently.

The MER and the host group must sign a contract for the convention 30 days prior to the current convention.

### 3. MER POLICY AND GUIDELINES

The following information describes the policies and guidelines for conducting an MER Convention:

#### 3.1 Contract Agreement

The LCC will enter a contractual agreement with the MER to host each MER Convention. This contract will be executed by the MER ECC and the MER President or MER Treasurer (See Sample contract - Form 4).

#### 3.2 Convention Dates - Policy

3.2.1 Conventions will normally be held on a weekend once a year (Thursday thru Sunday):

3.2.1.1 Fall - Late September to Mid-October

3.2.2 No convention shall be held on a weekend of a religious holiday or any holiday that might compromise operations or attendance of the convention.

3.2.3 Any deviation of the above convention dates shall require the express approval of MER.

#### 3.3 Locations

Optimally, the convention location rotates throughout the MER. This rotation will be standardized as best as reasonable so that each geographic area will have a convention nearby on a regular basis. The plan is for these areas to be hosts: North Carolina or Southern Virginia, Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

#### 3.4 Convention Activities

3.4.1 Required Activities - Policy

3.4.1.1 MER Contests

3.4.1.2 MER Board Meeting

3.4.1.3 Awards Ceremony

3.4.1.4 Clinics

3.4.1.5 MER Company Store (coordinate with Registrar's location)

3.4.1.6 Annual Meeting

3.4.1.7 Layout Visits

3.4.2 Optional Activities - Guidelines

3.4.2.1 Non-rail activities

3.4.2.2 Banquet (buffet or sit-down)

3.4.2.3 Movies or Slide Shows

3.4.2.4 Fan Trip(s)

3.4.2.5 Prototype Tours

3.4.2.6 Manufacturer Displays

3.4.2.7 White Elephant

3.4.2.8 Special Contests

3.4.2.9 Operations Callboard

3.4.2.10 Auction

3.4.2.11 Raffles

3.4.3 Alternate Activities Policy

Alternate activities may be planned for to replace any activity that may have to be canceled because of inclement weather or contractual problems.

3.5 Financial - Policy

3.5.1 The Convention Registrar shall be required to establish a financial and a statistical registration system for the convention. The MER Convention CAT Team performs this function.

3.5.2 The Convention Treasurer shall be required to open a convention checking account for handling all convention financial transactions via this account. The MER Convention CAT Team performs this function.

- 3.5.3 Any changes in financial hotel arrangements, including sleeping room rates, after the hotel contract has been signed require the approval of the MER ECC.
- 3.5.4 No funds shall be dispersed for convention activities in excess of the approved budget and contracted commitments without the permission of the MER ECC. This could cause a financial loss for the convention.
- 3.5.5 A loan will be made available from the MER for advance convention expenses.
- 3.5.6 The convention budget shall include a fee to cover MER convention requirements.

Each MER local convention committee must recompense the MER the amount of \$1750, to begin with the first convention not already negotiated as of 2018-04-28. The compensation will replace the current \$1250 “fee” which the local convention committees now pay to the MER. The \$1750 compensation will be remitted to the MER prior to any revenue split with the local host group. **(Adopted April 28, 2018)**

- 3.5.7 All primary registrants who are not current NMRA members will be assessed a \$10.00 fee to register for the convention by the Rail Pass mechanism (as available). Secondary registrants, e.g., invited module groups will have their registration status determined by the LCC in consultation with the ECC as needed with the LCC incurring/absorbing all costs, e.g. printing special badges to differentiate attendees. If the LCC decides to extend free registration to a specific clinician or banquet speaker that decision is also at the discretion of the LCC and to be budgeted as such.
- 3.5.8 All funds that are due to the MER shall be made payable to the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA, Inc. All fees and loans shall be required payable to the MER by the close of the convention.
- 3.5.9 A complete financial report and a registration statistical report shall be given to the MER ECC when all checks have cleared and bills paid after the completion of the convention. Financial records of each convention are subject to audit prior to final distribution. Funds due to the MER shall be forwarded promptly to the MER Treasurer.
- 3.5.10 Losses covered by the MER will be limited to these specifically contracted items: facilities, transportation, and food functions.
- 3.5.11 A \$5.00 registration must be charged for each family member attending an MER convention. Family members shall encompass significant others and sponsored minors up to and including the age of eighteen. It will specifically not include spouses who are established model railroaders. The policy shall be implemented at the first possible opportunity, to include all upcoming conventions where the registration charges have not yet been determined. **(Adopted April 28, 2018)**

3.5.12 Regarding cancellation fees:

- Any cancellation for any reason up to 30 days prior to the convention shall be refunded fully, less a \$10 administrative fee.
- Within 30 days of the start of the convention, only the base registration will be refunded, less a \$10 administrative fee. Tour tickets, including Operation Callboard tickets, and banquet tickets will not be refunded within 30 days of the start of the convention. If prepaid breakfast tickets are offered, they will be refunded only if the committee is not liable to the hotel.
- To receive any refund at all, the registrant must request said refund by USPS or email no later than November 30<sup>th</sup> of the convention year. Oral requests made at any time, including especially during the convention, will not be deemed sufficient to request a refund.

**(Adopted April 28, 2018)**

3.5.13 All approved activities of each MER convention must be included in total convention revenue, income and expenses, beginning with the first possible future convention as determined by the MER ECC. **(Adopted April 28, 2018)**

3.5.14 A 15% commission must be charged for MER convention auctions, white elephant sales and other relevant service sales, following the 2019 convention. **(Adopted April 28, 2018)**

Financial Policy Guidelines

1. A loan for advance convention funds will be available through the MER ECC. (Use the “Request for Convention Working Fund Advance” Form CH-1, as attached)
2. The fee that is to be due to the MER partially offsets certain costs for MER for such items as, but not limited to contest awards, MER overhead costs and advertising.
3. The convention budget shall be formulated to provide a 10% in excess over the projected costs of the convention. The budgetary excess shall be formulated based upon the cost per person for all convention activities except food costs. If there is to be a charge for meeting room space, whatever is the hotel’s minimum shall be factored into the budget. Care must be taken not to forget costs like hotel taxes, which are typically high, as much as 35%.
4. The loan repayment and the MER fees payment shall be paid to the MER by the close of the convention.
5. All funds payable to the MER shall be delivered to the Treasurer of the MER, and notification of payment shall be given to the MER ECC by the Treasurer.
6. All financial and statistical convention reports shall be delivered to the

MER ECC for distribution to the MER Board of Directors.

7. The budget of the convention, prior to the final contractual and/or registration publication commitment, shall be submitted to the MER ECC for review and approval.
8. The convention budget shall include sufficient funds to cover potential penalties for failure to meet required room-night commitments.
9. Final profit from the convention will be split 50/50 between the hosting Division(s) or Group(s), and the Region.
10. Funds for Judges' Lunches are budgeted by the LCC.
11. **No Division or Committee member shall pay for items out of their own pocket.**

Exception 1 – Stamps, envelopes and paper for letter.

Exception 2 – A member may get authorization from the Treasurer for small items.

### 3.6 Convention Facilities - Policy

3.6.1 The hotel accommodations shall be provided in close proximity to the convention activities.

3.6.2 Adequate space shall be provided for the following functions

3.6.2.1 Registration Area - Usually in the lobby or convention area equipped with tables and chairs for the registration personnel and a large bulletin board for convention notices. Provide for a separate bulletin board and tables for activities/groups for giving out information and posting announcements. Electricity must be available. (Combine the registration, the MER Company Store, and the hospitality room if room size and location permits.)

3.6.2.2 MER Board Meeting: Board Meeting Room - Provide for a small 20-30 people conference-style room for use by the MER Board for the Board meeting. [Recommended space is 350 sq ft ]

3.6.2.3 Clinic Rooms: Provide for 2-4 theater-style seating rooms, each for 50-100 people [See 6.1 – 6.5 for details]

3.6.2.4 MER Contests Room: The rooms must be large and well lit with a minimum of exits for security purposes. The rooms should provide adequate space for an absolute minimum of 150 square feet of table space for the model and craft displays with sufficient room for four-foot minimum aisles. (See 5.1-5.7.3 for specifics]. Some exhibitors and/or contest judges may require power for their displays or extra lamps for judging.

3.6.2.5 Awards Ceremony Room: Usually coincides with the Banquet Room. If no banquet is held at the convention, provide for a theater-style seating room for 200-300 people equipped with a public address system, a screen and projector for showing slides of the winning entries and future conventions, and tables

for holding plaques, trophies and certificates. [Recommended space is 2000 sq ft]

3.6.2.6 Annual Meeting Room: Initially this meeting traditionally is initiated as part of the Banquet (or equivalent on Saturday) and adjourned for continuance thereafter the following day (usually Sunday morning) and takes place in a room equivalent to one of the clinic rooms [Recommended space is 1000 sq ft]

3.6.2.7 Company Store & Door Prizes [Recommended space is 500 sq ft]

3.6.2.8 **Optional Activities**

3.6.2.8.1 Movie Room: A theater-style seating room for 75-100 people.

3.6.2.8.2 Displays: Model Displays are usually accommodated as possible within the Contest Room. Flexibility is required to address these as unknown quantities of such items may arrive without warning.

3.6.2.8.3 Banquet Room: Required to accommodate 250-350 people for dinner. A raised platform or a head table for regional officials may be required. The hotel will typically need 3 days advance notice as to the quantity, which should be known from the registration; a reasonable attempt should be made to accommodate attendees who are walk-ins. The banquet room typically also serves as the location for the awards ceremony, speaker, etc., but also for the auction. Thus, it is most efficient to have the room where the auction items are displayed reasonably close proximity.

3.6.2.8.4 White Elephant Room: A large well-lighted room with a minimum of exits because of security reasons will be required. The room should hold at least 10 tables (30" x 72" or equivalent) with sufficient aisle space. [This space is frequently combined with the space used to hold and display Auction items based upon available rooms and personnel to operate these activities.]

3.6.2.8.5 Auction Room: Provide for a theater-style seating room for 200-300 people equipped with a raised platform, tables and a public address system (if needed). A nearby, preferably adjacent and lockable item registration and holding room for the sales items and the LCC's financial accounting staff is preferable (Display area for items prior to the auction that may coincide with a White Elephant room). Both item registration and the auction itself may require electricity. [Recommended space is 2000 sq ft]

3.6.3 The hotel choice shall be in the medium price range and all rooms shall be with the standard appointments.

3.6.4 The hotel accommodations and all space arrangements shall be confirmed in writing as to the cost and the time periods of use.

3.6.5 Most hotels do not allow retail sales from sleeping rooms. No sales will be permitted from

sleeping rooms unless approved by the hotel. It is not MER's intent to provide dealer space during a convention.

- 3.6.6 All food and drink arrangements that are to be furnished by the hotel/caterer shall be confirmed in writing as to quality, menu, quantity and cost, and approved by the MER ECC. This is normally quite expensive, and should be avoided; however, it is recognized that this is rapidly becoming normal for hotels to contractually require themselves to be the source of all food inside the hotel. **Breakfast Facilities** – Optimally should be available on site to provide for a quick and early breakfast, if an outside activity has been planned.
- 3.6.7 The hotel facilities and rates shall require the review by the MER ECC prior to any contract commitment.
- 3.6.8 If comp rooms are available, their disposition will be at the discretion of the MER ECC and Convention Chair.

#### Guidelines

The MER President should be the first recipient of a comp room. The CAT Team Registrar should be the second recipient of a comp room. The Convention Chairman should be the third. Convention Handbook

- 3.7 Responsibilities for the MER CAT - Policies and Activities
- 3.7.1 Provide the Registrar function for the convention. The Registrar will be responsible for the basic paper packages for all attendees. The registrar must be informed about all extra fare items, and all of the basic costs like registration and hotel.
- 3.7.2 Provide the Convention Treasurer function for the convention. The Treasurer will establish the bank account(s).
- 3.7.3 Provide the AP/contest judging for the convention. This includes any secretarial efforts, including registration and awards management. This is an independent self-managing operation.
- 3.7.4 Assist with, or execute, Clinic planning.
- 3.8 Responsibilities for the Local Convention Committee - Policy
- 3.8.1 Planning and coordinating all of the MER required in consultation with the ECC, optional and local alternate convention activities.
- 3.8.2 Under the direction of the Convention Treasurer, conduct all financial matters of the convention.

This includes establishing a budget, collecting fees, paying contractors, paying the MER and accounting for revenue.

- 3.8.3 Preparing the initial Registration Form (Processed by the Registrar), Publicity, and the Hotel Accommodations Information and providing them to the MER ECC, no later than 9 months prior to the convention for the LOCAL convention issue.
- 3.8.4 Under the direction of the Convention Registrar (a stand-alone operation that is coordinated by the ECC), manages registrations, both pre-convention and at the door, and desk coverage at the convention.
- 3.8.5 Clinics - lead all arrangements pertaining to the clinics. (See the Region Clinic Planning Guide, Section 6 [This is supported by the MER CAT Clinics Coordinator].
- 3.8.6 Contests - The MER CAT provides this function as a stand-alone operation that is coordinated by the ECC. The MER will provide for the insurance against theft of models through the NMRA. The LCC shall provide for an eat-in lunch for judges; for example, a hoagie and soft drink, not expensive hotel catering, as permitted. Budget for ~20 people on this item.
- 3.8.7 Awards Ceremony - provide time on the Banquet (or equivalent) schedule and the space for the contest awards and other awards to be presented. While this is usually a part of the Banquet, this can also be an individual activity. The program is to be arranged by the MER ECC. Coordination by the LCC chair with the MER ECC and Contest Chair is required prior to the ceremony.
- 3.8.8 \*Auction/White Elephant/Raffle - Provide a room for registering and holding the auction items until such time for the Auction and/or similarly for White Elephant sale items. Provide a minimum of space for the local members to receive entries and to manage the White Elephant sales and/or auction activities. All income (or loss) from these activities as well as a Raffle and/or Door Prizes reside with the hosting Division(s) or Group(s).
- 3.8.9 \*Call board/operating sessions may be arranged and coordinated by the LCC. Fees assessed for these sessions shall be limited to real costs, e.g. for the provision of light snacks and liquid refreshments. These fees are not to be used as a profit making activity and are to be paid to the hosts of these sessions; however, it is also recognized that the use of these fees may be useful for insuring registrants of these sessions to attend.
- 3.8.10 \*Solicitation of the participation of modular groups to display & operate (optional) layouts on site may be arranged and coordinated by the LCC.
- 3.8.11 Create and maintain an up-to-date Web-site. This should include content about layout tours, clinics, prototype tours, and other special activities. It should also include the electronic

registration form, and a downloadable registration form.

3.8.12 Non-rail Activities - provide for the tours, contests, demonstrations, luncheons, games and clinics for entertaining non-rail oriented convention attendees. The MER Clinic Coordinator (CAT Team position) will assist.

3.8.13 Fan Trips, Layout Tours and/or any other rail-related activities are to be provided. Arrangements for these items need to be made at least 10 months ahead of the convention year. Potential Open House hosts must be approached early, to give them time to planning, then reminded 90 days before the convention, and re-confirmed finally 2-3 weeks before the convention, so that any pending problems can be dealt with, and if a host has to cancel, minimize disruption to the convention schedule. Bus trips must be organized on roughly the same time schedule, to confirm that the bus company fails to be available for the trip(s) for whatever reason requiring a last minute scramble to secure alternate transportation.

3.8.14 Photographer -- The MER CAT will provide this function.

Guidelines:

1. Provide local personnel to support the activities above.
2. Communicate all convention activity problems with the MER ECC, CAT Registrar/Treasure, and the MER Contest Chair, as required.

\* = Optional

3.9 **Insurance - Policy**

3.9.1 Model Contest Theft Insurance will be provided through the NMRA.

3.9.2 Liability Insurance will be provided through the NMRA for NMRA members.

3.9.3 Non-Members will be issued a Rail Pass membership if they are eligible for all Convention Activities. Non-Members that are solely providing an open house function will need to be covered by their Home Owner's Insurance and this should be confirmed well in advance.

Guidelines:

1. For special requirements, contact the MER ECC.
2. All claims shall be made through the MER ECC.
3. It is the responsibility of the MER Treasurer to assure that

liability and theft insurance are available for each convention.

4. Additional riders may be required for outside activities at additional cost. The ECC must be notified about riders or special coverage not later than 60 days prior to the convention.

#### 3.9.4 General policies

Any questions concerning an entry's category will be resolved before judging begins. A certificate and an appropriate ribbon (as available) will be given to all winners of First, Second, and Third place. A Best-of-Show plaque will be awarded to the most deserving entry as determined by the judges.

#### 3.10 Contests - Policy

3.10.1 The MER will present a Best of Show plaque for each convention and they shall be distinctive from all other certificates presented.

3.10.2 The MER will encourage sponsorships of special awards by individuals, recognized groups, or organizations for contests within the established categories of MER contests. These awards, as approved by the BOD, shall be for a term not to exceed two years and are renewable. The President's Award and those others designated as such will remain official MER awards until such time as they may be discontinued.

3.10.3 Rules for approved MER convention contests are:

3.10.3.1 Popular vote contest.

3.10.3.1.1 Convention registrants are the voters.

3.10.3.1.2 A Popular Vote Ballot will be provided in the Contest Room.

3.10.3.1.3 In the designated area on the ballot, the registrant prints the contest entry number of the model in appropriate line for each contest.

3.10.3.1.4 Place the ballot in the ballot box.

3.10.3.1.5 **THERE MAY BE ONLY ONE VOTE PER ATTENDEE/Registrant.**

3.10.3.2 All other contests will be judged by NMRA rules or those approved by the MER Board.

3.10.3.3 The MER Contest Chair is responsible for procuring the awards as budgeted and/or directed

by the President.

#### 3.10.4 MODEL CONTEST

Categories for this contest are: Steam, Diesel, Traction, Freight Car, Non-Revenue (Maintenance-of-Way), Caboose, Passenger Car, On-Line Structure, Off-Line Structure, On-Line Display, Off-Line Display, and Modules. Awards will include a First Place Plaque, and First, Second and Third Place Certificates in each of these categories. A Best-of-Show Plaque will also be awarded to the one entry judged best in the entire judged contest.

#### 3.11 Convention Advertising

The LCC is contracted to cover the cost of advertising in three issues of the LOCAL. Typically ten pages of the LOCAL are allotted by the Editor to advertise the upcoming convention. Additional page requirements or other advertising may be billed to the LCC. Timely and accurate submission of convention advertising to the LOCAL Editor is essential. The pages are typically an opening announcement page and a registration in the May/June issue, three descriptive pages and the registration page in the July/August issue, and three different descriptive pages with a final registration page in the September/October issue of The LOCAL.

The LCC is strongly recommended to take every opportunity to advertise their convention by placing an appropriate article in the NMRA magazine, contacting and distributing information and updates regularly to the MER membership via e-mail, contacting MER Division Superintendents, contacting neighboring Regions, and attending, displaying and presenting at neighboring Regional conventions as well as at other events as available such as trains shows that take place in the Region.

#### 3.12 Final Plans

This document and all convention plans are to be discussed in detail with the MER ECC before proceeding with any firm planning for the convention. The MER ECC shall be kept informed on convention program changes and other problems on a timely basis.

#### 3.13 Miscellaneous - Policy

3.12.1 The MER encourages any reasonable special projects to commemorate their conventions.

## 4. CONVENTION PLANNING

### 4.1 Organization Structure:

In order to manage a convention successfully, a certain degree of organization shall be required to coordinate all of the convention activities. The following is a representative outline of a convention organization structure to help in the formulation of a LCC. Application of the enclosed procedures is at your discretion to fit the local convention activities.

The enclosed representative convention organizational structure is formatted into an executive organization controlling numerous committees, each having a pre-defined charter or responsibility. The charter for each committee is intended to define in detail the tasks for which it is responsible.

The Executive Officers will be the prime day-to-day coordinators and officials of the convention. The charter from which they operate delineates their positions and duties. The LCC in turn combines all of the committees into a cohesive planning and meeting body. The other committees report to the appropriate Executive Officer on technical matters and to the Executive Committee.

The Charter for the Executive Officers and the Executive Committee is as follows:

#### CHARTER FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Executive Officers

The duties of the Convention Chair, the Convention Manager, and the Convention Treasurer shall consist of running the day-to-day affairs of the convention and acting as the prime source of information and coordination throughout the convention. The responsibilities and duties of these officers are:

4.1.1 The ECC leads the CAT.

4.1.2 Convention Chair (or Co-Chairs):

4.1.2.1 shall be “Head” of the convention. In this capacity he shall be the prime spokesperson of the convention;

4.1.2.2 shall be the prime contact with the MER ECC;

4.1.2.3 shall have overall responsibility for contact with the hotel and other key cost activities; the hotel contract is negotiated and approved by the MER ECC;

4.1.2.4 shall oversee the activities of all committees;

4.1.2.5 shall review and approve the financial arrangements made for the convention; and

- 4.1.2.6 may change the charters of the committees if deemed necessary.
- 4.1.2.7 The ECC shall not normally act in the dual capacity as a Convention Chair for the LCC. The only circumstance in which the ECC may also act as LCC is when the CAT Team is acting as the Convention Committee.
- 4.1.3 Convention Manager. (Assistant Chair)
- 4.1.3.1 shall assist the Chair in the above activities and shall be responsible for:
- 4.1.3.1.1 Management program for the convention;
- 4.1.3.1.2 Delegated committee task assignment;
- 4.1.3.1.3 Committee technical coordination;
- 4.1.3.1.4 Convention detail planning;
- 4.1.3.1.5 Overall convention scheduling;
- 4.1.3.1.6 Assisting the Treasurer as required.
- 4.1.3.2 shall be responsible for originating and maintaining the convention correspondence as required (secretarial duties). He/she shall work closely with the Convention Chair in all matters.
- 4.1.4 The Convention Treasurer. (CAT Team):
- 4.1.4.1 shall be responsible for the financial and statistical affairs of the convention. In this endeavor, he shall be the sole determining judge for approval of any expenditure based upon the Budget of the convention;
- 4.1.4.2 shall, with the assistance of the chairs of the committees, submit the proposed Budget for the convention. When approved by the Executive Committee and the Convention Chair, this will be the Budget for the convention.
- 4.1.4.3 shall statistically attempt to predict the registration in each category for the convention and base the convention Budget upon these and other budgeted receipts and disbursements.
- 4.1.4.4 shall set up and maintain suitable accounting records for the convention.
- 4.1.4.5 shall set up a checking account for the convention. This account shall be used for all deposits and disbursements.

4.1.4.6 shall formulate, based upon the committee's input, the amount of funds required in advance from the MER.

4.1.4.7 may elect to form a financial committee to assist him. In this respect, the Convention Treasurer will act as chair of the committee.

In the remote case where the Convention Chair is absent and the convention business must be carried out, the following guidelines must be noted:

1. The Convention Manager will take over the responsibilities of the Convention Chair except as noted.
2. The Convention Treasurer will handle all financial related items.

In case of absence of either the Convention Treasurer and/or the Convention Manager, the Convention Chair will assume the responsibility of the missing officer.

4.1.5 Executive Committee:

4.1.5.1 shall consist of the executive officers and the chairs of the committee; and,

4.1.5.2 shall be tasked with deciding, by discussion, the major policies of the convention. This shall include the primary task of deciding and approving the Budget of the convention.

4.1.5.3 The Chair of the convention shall be head of the Executive Committee.

4.1.5.4 Notification by telephone, mail, or e-mail shall be made at least one week in advance to all members that an Executive meeting will be held.

4.1.5.5 The committee meetings shall be open to all members of any committee.

4.1.5.6 The Chair of the Executive Committee will plan an agenda for each meeting and note those action items for resolution. He shall also maintain a synopsis of meeting minutes and forwards a copy to the MER ECC.

### **Rationale**

The following attempts to answer some questions as to the reasons why jobs were noted and spread out vice combined into a job for a single person or a committee.

1. Why should there be a Convention Chair and a Convention Manager? The reason is that running a convention must be on two levels. Level One is the planning/technical level, when charting, funding, people and scheduling principles are to be required on a time table basis. This is a job

for a Convention Manager. Level Two is on a personality, social, administrative and arbitration level. This job is for the Convention Chair. By dividing the work and with the two working as a team to balance each other, the day-to-day activities can be accomplished without overburdening or depending on any one individual.

2. Why should there be an Executive Committee? The Executive committee acts as a forum for the formal meeting or meetings for formulating the convention plans and for deciding the funding allocations. It also keeps everyone informed, and, if the guidelines are adhered to makes the convention group a democratic process and not a dictatorship. The Executive Committee in truth is too large a body to effectively operate for the detailed decisions. In practice, the Executive Officers, based upon the planning formulation of the Executive Committee, makes the detailed decisions.
3. Why are there so many committees? Committees are only names of groups or individuals tasked to do a job. The committee (or tasks) can be combined to suit the convention. The committee basically represents a task to be accomplished. The use of the committee organizational structure is is also representative of a convention organization structure to help in the formulation of a LCC. Application of the above procedures and structure is at your discretion to fit the local convention activities.
4. Why does someone else not handle most of the non-rail tasks? Except for those few host groups that have a dynamic group of people who want to do it themselves, most non-rail activities are implemented by the other groups to provide coordinated scheduling and planning. It is usually easier for one person to manage, for example, all transportation for the convention than to have two activities do it individually with confusion to the local bus company.

## 4.2 PERSONNEL STAFFING

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Choosing the personnel for running a convention is usually a limited one. Usually a group gets together and decides whether they would like to host a convention. This group is usually the key personnel nucleus of the host convention. The rest of the personnel will be the volunteers who will assist.

The subject of personnel staffing refers to the accurate application of the nucleus group and the volunteers into a cohesive effort to support the convention.

The Personnel Selection Criteria (Section 4.2.4) represents guidelines on the selection of people to do the convention tasks. The key people are responsible for assessing the personnel available to them and making the necessary assignments. However, in order to get the job done, it is better to turn down or replace the volunteer as needed, if it is felt that a person cannot or will not do the task correctly.

### 4.2.2 Personnel Selection

- 4.2.2.1 The following selection criteria lists the individual positions required for the tasks noted. The criterion for choosing the key people is an optimistic one realizing that no one individual can fill all of the requirements. However, it does provide an insight into the type of individuals required to do the task correctly.
- 4.2.2.2 It is well known that some of the better MER conventions have been put on with only a bare minimum of personnel and only one key individual. Therefore, this listing of criteria for personnel should not act as a negation for host group convention plans, but the policy is not to have a single person do all the work — the CAT Team exists to spread the load, provide experience from previous conventions, and streamline common efforts.
- 4.2.2.3 The following members of the MER Board of Directors may not serve on the LCC as Convention Chair, Convention Manager, or Convention Treasurer due to potential for conflicts of interest: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, directors-at-large, or the business manager. (Section numbered and restriction added 10/04/2018)
- 4.2.3 Miscellaneous
- 4.2.3.1 In most cases, each member of the local convention committee will wear many chair hats. The prime message from our experience is to ensure that the individual is on top of the assigned task and you will not have a major problem.
- 4.2.3.2 **The most common problems that occur in managing personnel are due to poor communications.** You must ensure that each staff member knows everything about the task assignment(s) and all of the problems that are involved before they commit themselves. In this way, you will be assured that the individual will be able to apply themselves to the total problem involved. Lacking this degree of idealized personnel, self-starters will usually complete the assignment in good order.
- 4.2.3.3 If everything else fails, remember that most conventioners would be willing to help if you ask them for help.
- 4.2.4 Personnel Selection Criteria
- 4.2.4.1 Convention Chair - The Chair should be a dynamic individual who should be capable of organizing the people and the activities. The Chair should be knowledgeable of the region's activities and have attended prior conventions. The Chair should be capable of acting as the spokesperson for the convention.
- 4.2.4.2 Convention Manager - The Manager should be an individual who is detail conscious and should

be capable of planning and scheduling the activities in advance. The Manager should also be knowledgeable as to the details of a convention's make-up.

- 4.2.4.3 Convention Treasurer (CAT Team) - The Treasurer must be an individual who is capable of financial estimating and has experience in the financial management field. Precise and accurate accounting standards and procedures must be followed.
- 4.2.4.4 Committee Heads - The Committee Heads should be chosen for their willingness to work with little or no supervision and their "can do attitude". Anyone who volunteers and half-heartedly says only "OK" may be more of a problem than doing it yourself!
- 4.2.4.4.1 **All of these key personnel should have a copy of the Convention Handbook and be familiar with its contents!**
- 4.2.4.5 Volunteers - A good number of volunteers will be required for the convention site.
- 4.2.4.5.1 Setup/Strikedown - A three (3) person group (suggested) will be required for the morning of the convention to arrange the rooms and the activities and to clean up directly after the convention closes. Clean up is critical since the MER would like to be able to return to some venues in the future!
- 4.2.4.5.2 Registration/Information - A minimum of four (4) people (suggested) will be required for setting up the information displays and for providing a team for registration.
- 4.2.4.5.3 Auction/Contests/Security - A group of individuals will be required for covering all of the activities at the convention site. This group by far takes the most number of volunteers. The contest room must be covered for security reasons and validate people moving models both in and out of the convention. A group of individuals will be required to register items in the Auction/White Elephant room and provide security. Only trusted volunteers should be used. If necessary, volunteers could be recruited during the conventions.
- 4.2.4.5.4 Fan Trips - A group of individuals will be required to coordinate and ride the fan trip to ensure that the activities go as planned for controlling the movement of the convention. If the fan trip is a supervised layout tour, driving dry runs to the destinations are required for scheduling a time table operation.

### 4.3 CONVENTION COUNTDOWN

#### 4.3.1 Introduction

The convention countdown refers to a calendar schedule of events that are required to take place prior to the convention itself. The events must be performed and all agreements must be reached in order to provide adequate arrangements for the convention, as specified.

#### 4.3.2 Format

The format of the enclosed chart notes (**in draft**) when certain activities must occur over a two-year period prior to a convention.

Prior to ~9 months before a convention, the time and the activities may be slipped in any manner. After 9 months prior to the convention, the time frame notes should be adhered to closely.

## 5. REGION CONTEST PLANNING GUIDELINES

Meeting the following requirements will be the responsibility of the LLC for planning the Region Model Contest with consultation of the MER Contest Chair.

### 5.1 Contest Room

The room should be large enough to contain the model display tables, the registration table, and adequate spectator viewing space. Ideally, two doors for allowing “flow-through” viewing traffic should be provided. The room shall be lockable for security purposes.

### 5.2 Lighting

In many cases, the available room lighting may be inadequate and supplemental lamps, lights, etc., shall be required. Glare from added sources should be avoided. The ideal judging and viewing illumination approaches that under which the models were built.

### 5.3 Tables

A minimum of twelve 5-foot long tables will be required, in addition to 16 - 18 feet of table space for the favorite train contest. White table cloths or covers shall be preferred. Additional tables may be required dependent on model entry numbers and sizes. A minimum of 15 chairs will be required for the judges for judging the models. A minimum of 3 chairs and 2 tables will be required for registration.

### 5.4 Registration

The MER Contest Chair will register all of the model contest entries and provide all of the required materials and forms.

### 5.5 Miscellaneous

Provide extension cords for powered or lighted entries. Ample pencils, pens, and ballots, and a ballot box for the favorite train voting are provided by the MER Contest Chair. The Favorite Train and/or Popular Vote ballot counting will be the responsibility of the MER Contest Chair. Security of the contest area during all hours will be the responsibility of the LCC. Access to the Contest room will be provided to the MER Contest Chair. A simple lunch will be provided for the judges, *i.e.* hoagies and soft drink (again, not the hotel’s expensive catering, if permitted) and will be the responsibility of the

LCC and coordinated with the MER Contest Chair.

#### 5.6 Timing

The registration of contest arrivals is primarily held on Friday with Saturday morning available to late arrivals. The convention schedule (determined by the LCC) should be posted near the convention registration desk and/or in the convention handout. The contest judging will require a minimum of four (4) hours and maximum of seven (7) hours, totally dependent on the number of entries which is not predictable. Additional time will be required for taking pictures for The LOCAL (preferably should be done during judging). Judging and picture taking is usually not completed in time for opening the contest room on Saturday afternoon, but the room will open after the awards are presented.

## 6. REGION CLINIC PLANNING GUIDELINES

The clinics or seminars covering prototype and modeling subjects for the rail oriented conventioneer or non-rail topics for the other attendees are a very important part of each convention meet. The following requirements will be the responsibility of the LCC in planning for the presentation of Region Clinics.

### 6.1 Clinic Rooms – Set-up

Clinic rooms should be large enough for comfortably seating 50-100 people. Theatre seating is typically used for clinics that do not involve a hands-on clinic. Classroom seating (with tables) is required for hands-on clinics. Table tops should be protected from damage. Rolls of kraft paper are suitable, although work surfaces suitable for cutting, gluing, painting, etc. may be required. The clinician should be consulted to determine if additional items are needed, such as a sufficient number of tables for displaying the modeling subject, if employed in the clinic; an easel. or for a slide/movie projector with a screen. More tables may be needed for make & take hands-on clinics.

### 6.2 Lighting

Room lighting variation on dimmer light switches is preferred if a projector is used. Room lighting is usually adequate for most clinics. Some clinicians may require electrical outlets.

### 6.3 A-V Equipment

Plan on providing a computer projector and projector screen. Clinicians should be queried if they require other equipment, such as easels with pads and pens. Many clinics are prepared and presented using computer software. Clinicians usually provide their own laptop computers. Other arrangements may be necessary and clinicians should be queried as to requirements. Items like projectors and computers are susceptible to theft. The LCC should take prudent precautions, such as using security cables. These items are usually available from the convention facility for a substantial fee. The LCC should make every effort to supply these directly or at a lower cost. The LCC should also validate that their supplied equipment is functional on-site prior to the start of the clinics.

### 6.4 Clinics Coordinator

The LCC convention chair appoints the LCC Clinics Coordinator, who is responsible for all arrangements pertaining to the clinics, including obtaining clinicians. The MER Clinic Chair is required to assist the local Convention Committee Chair in identifying potential clinicians. The Clinics Coordinator solicits potential clinicians to produce an interesting and balanced program. The Clinics Coordinator is the primary point of contact with clinicians, obtains descriptions of the clinic suitable for promoting the convention, scheduling the clinics, interfacing with the clinician concerning logistics and equipment, and doing whatever else is necessary and prudent to having a good clinics program. Inclusion of hands-on “make & take” clinics is recommended. Experience has shown that it is prudent to reconfirm all arrangements with clinicians a week prior to the convention.

### 6.5 Timing

The clinics should be presented at times when the most people can attend. They should not be

scheduled at the same time when the Awards Presentation Ceremony or Annual Meeting is in progress. If multiple clinics are scheduled at the same time, then some clinics should be scheduled twice (preferable) if reasonable during the convention to allow for maximum attendance. Whether to schedule a clinic more than once is an LCC decision.

## 6.6 Clinician Recognition and Financial Arrangements

- 6.6.1 All clinicians must register and pay for their convention activities. Clinicians should be presented with an appropriate certificate commemorating and confirming their participation and presentation of clinic. This is useful for those clinicians pursuing their Volunteer Certificate in the AP.
- 6.6.2 The local host group is responsible for making the arrangements for, and providing certificates. Beyond the issuance of a certificate, an provision for a gift such as a convention coffee mug, or convention hat or shirt is within those options available to the LCC, if desired.
- 6.6.3 Clinicians can be reimbursed for the cost of materials for extra-fare clinics. As such, information regarding “extra fare” charges for clinics that are arranged need to be coordinated with the Registrar to insure their inclusion on the registration form and on the web. Additionally, said fees are collected by the Registrar and thereafter distributed directly to those clinicians.
- 6.6.4 The LCC may decide whether to independently provide clinic notes and other materials and the media (e.g., paper, online). The LCC may decide to reimburse clinicians for printing notes.
- 6.6.5 Many nationally well-known modelers are being requested to present clinics at conventions all over the country on a monthly or more frequent basis. Most try to accommodate as many of these requests as possible. However, it is becoming increasingly financially difficult for these people to do so. Therefore, nationally well-known clinicians may be provided with a complimentary room with the approval of the ECC. Reimbursement of other expenses must be approved by the MER through the ECC. Rental vehicles shall not be provided. The LCC should not hesitate to contact the ECC for advice, clarification and approval.

**THE REASON FOR ECC AND/OR MER APPROVAL IS TO KEEP THIS COST UNDER CONTROL.**

## 7. REQUEST FOR CONVENTION WORKING FUND ADVANCE

Name of Convention:  
Dates of Convention:  
Location of Convention:  
Amount Requested \$:  
Make Check Payable to:

Give complete details on what this advance will be used for, in the space below and/or attach the details on a separate sheet.

Mail Check To:

Name:  
Address:  
City, State, Zip+4:  
Signature of LCC Chairman \_\_\_\_\_  
and Convention Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form to the Executive Convention Chairman

For Approval of \$0 -\$200.00: to the Executive Convention Chairman

For Approval of \$200.00 - \$500.00: to the MER Treasurer

For Approval of requests above \$500: MER BOD must approve

## 8. CONVENTION STATISTICAL REPORT

Name of Convention:

Hotel Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip+4:

Dates:

Price of a complete MER Convention Registration: \$

Rail: Non-Rail:

Complete Registrations:

Other Registrations:

(non-NMRA):

TOTAL ATTENDANCE:

Advanced Registrations:

Attach a typed copy of the MER Registration Form used for this Convention and your (Hosting Division) Financial Statement to this report and mail them to the Executive Convention Chairman.

Your check for funds being turned over to the Mid-Eastern Region should be sent to the Mid-Eastern Region Treasurer.

Make all checks payable to the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA, Inc.  
The MER Executive Convention Chairman will distribute copies of this report.

(FORM CH - 2A)

## 9. CONVENTION STATISTICAL SHEET

Convention Name:

Date:

Registration:

Break Even:

Convention Registration Rate	\$
Hotel Rooms - blocked	
- pick up	
Hotel Room Rate	\$
Meeting Rooms - available	
- utilized	
Meeting Space Rate	\$
Total room nights Sold by the Hotel by day	_____
MER Fee	\$
MER Loan	\$

## 10. CONVENTION FINANCIAL REPORT

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Convention Location:

Convention Dates:

### INCOME:

Registrations	\$
Company Store	\$
Extra-fare	\$
Banquet	\$
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	\$

### EXPENSES:

Banquet	\$
Buses	\$
Extra Fare items	\$
Lunches for Judges	\$
Printing	\$
Miscellaneous Hotel Expenses	\$
Hotel penalty for room-night shortage	\$
Advance from the Mid-Eastern Region	\$
Mid-Eastern Region Fee	\$
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$
BALANCE	\$

(Balance is shared equally between the host group and the MER)

Host Convention Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Convention Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Attach Convention Budget spreadsheet computer file (Excel) to this report.

(FORM CH - 2C)

## 11. MER CONVENTION BANQUET ACTIVITIES

The banquet activities are under the control of the ECC. This form (recommended activities and order) will be filled out by members of the MER staff and coordinated by the MER ECC.

The banquet starts at \_\_\_\_\_

The Cocktail Party (No Host - Cash Bar) starts **1** hour prior to the banquet \_\_\_\_\_

Before the Banquet starts, the Banquet Host, \_\_\_\_\_ will welcome the group.

Invocation (optional) will be given by \_\_\_\_\_

Food Service starts being served.

Program starts after dessert is served.

### 11.1 The Program

11.1.1 Host introduces the President of the MER \_\_\_\_\_

11.1.2 MER President will call the Annual Meeting to order. Introduce MER Officers/visiting NMRA Dignitaries (5 minutes). If the President or Vice President of the NMRA is present, allow 5 minutes for remarks.

A.

B.

C.

D.

11.1.3 The MER President will ask for an adjournment until Sunday Morning

11.1.4 The MER President thanks the host group and returns the program to the Host.

11.1.5 Introduction of the Host group by the Host Chairman (5 minutes).

Appreciation to Suppliers for the Door Prizes, other contributions, etc.

11.1.6 Introduction of the after dinner Speaker / entertainment portion of the program

11.1.7 Introduce Achievement Program Chairman for the presentation of the Achievement Awards and / or MMR award(s) as necessary (10 minutes).

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

- 11.1.8 Introduce MER Contest Chair.
- 11.1.9 MER Contest Chair hands out Contest Room Awards. (20-30 minutes)
- 11.1.10 MER Contest Chair calls upon various presenters of Special Awards and returns program to the Host.
- 11.1.11 Introduce the representative(s) from the next MER convention for the presentation of their activities (10 minutes).
- 11.1.12 Closing comments
- 11.1.13 Announcements

**The End**

## 12. Convention Contract

### THE MID EASTERN REGION, N.M.R.A., INC

This agreement is entered into on dd/mm/yyyy by the Mid-Eastern Region, N.M.R.A. Inc, a non-profit Maryland Corporation, hereinafter call MER, and enter name of name of Division here hereinafter called the Host, for the purpose of providing an enjoyable and educational model railroad convention for MER members and other interested persons.

The MER agrees to: (a) provide guidance to the Host through its Executive Convention Chair; (b) to inspect the proposed facilities to ensure they meet the general requirements for a convention facility; (c) to negotiate a hotel contract; (d) to provide a loan of \$\_\_\_\_\_ at no interest as advance money; (e) to provide adequate liability and property damage insurance through the N.M.R.A., Inc.; (f) to provide convention advertising and registration forms in the pre-convention issues of “*The LOCAL*”; and (g) to underwrite any contractual loss the Host may incur in running the convention. Conversely, no profits shall accrue to the Host, but shall revert to the MER General Fund.

The Host agrees to: (a) provide adequate facilities to handle the convention activities as set forth in the Convention Handbook, for (b) a registration attendance fee approved by the MER Executive Convention Chair; (c) to provide adequate sleeping rooms at reasonable cost nearby and suitable eating facilities for the convention. The Host also agrees to repay the costs of “*The LOCAL*” pre-convention advertising, and loan repayment as noted in Appendix ‘A’ of this agreement. The Host agrees to surrender all excess of funds realized from the convention as set forth in the convention handbook, and to supply the Executive Convention Chair and Treasurer of the MER a complete financial report and other data as required by the convention handbook. Tentative dates and location of the convention are: \_\_\_\_\_

In witness thereof, the undersigned have approved this agreement.

For MER:

Executive Convention Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

MER President: \_\_\_\_\_

or Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Host:

Division Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_

Convention Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Convention Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix A:

Convention Fee\*: \$1750 (Changed April 28, 2018)

Loan, if applicable: \$\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$\_\_\_\_\_

\*This fee partially offsets costs for MER for such items as, but not limited to contest awards, MER overhead costs and advertising.