

Senior Director, Meetings & Events

IAAO | Senior Leadership Team | Reports to the Executive Director

Own a Problem Worth Solving

IAAO's Annual Conference is well-regarded. It is not yet unmissable. That's one gap. It's not the only one — our full lineup of leadership programs, educational conferences, specialty events, and international meetings all need to grow too. That combined gap is the job.

We're looking for a Senior Director, Meetings & Events who is genuinely energized by a clear, hard problem: how do you take a respected industry conference and turn it into a destination event — while also growing every other event in the lineup, in every way that matters? This is not a meeting-logistics role. It's an executive seat on our Senior Leadership Team, with real accountability for a high-stakes events lineup and a direct line to one of our organization's top strategic priorities over the next decade.

If you read a strategic plan and start seeing the moves before you finish the page, keep reading.

The Problems You'll Own

Our Board has already done the hard work of naming the targets. What we need is an executive who can build and run the plan to hit them:

- Make the Annual Conference a destination event — not just bigger, but genuinely can't-miss, with the programming, experience, and reputation to match.
- Grow every event in the lineup, not just the flagship — leadership programs, educational conferences, specialty events, and international meetings all have room to grow.
- Grow attendance in every way that matters, at every event: total numbers, first-time and early-career attendees, and international participation.
- Build and operationalize an Event Lifecycle Framework so every event in our lineup is evaluated, invested in, redesigned, or retired based on evidence — not habit.
- Increase what our events contribute to total organizational revenue, while protecting the member value that makes people want to show up.
- Build the systems and team capability to sustain this growth for the long run, not just for one great year.

You'll get real detail on all of this in the interview process — including the chance to bring your own point of view on the Annual Conference and the rest of the lineup.

Your First 90 Days

We're not looking for someone who shows up with a pre-baked plan to blow things up. We're looking for someone who can move fast on understanding and relationship-building, and arrive at a credible point of view quickly. In your first 90 days, you'll:

- Get deep into the current events lineup — the financials, the history, what's worked, what hasn't, and why.
- Build real working relationships with the Executive Director, Board, Conference Committee, Local Host Committee, and key volunteer leaders.
- Learn how decisions actually get made here — what's yours to decide, what requires Board buy-in, and how to build consensus for the changes that need it.
- Deliver a first working vision for transforming the Annual Conference and growing the rest of the lineup — built collaboratively, ready to pressure-test with leadership.

Who We're Looking For

This role could be a strong fit whether your background is in association meetings or somewhere else entirely. What matters most is the track record and the thinking, not the pedigree.

- You may have already led a turnaround or launch of a flagship, destination-caliber event — association-based, corporate, or a large-scale consumer or branded conference — and can speak concretely to how you did it.
- Or you may not have done this exact thing before, but you can make a genuinely compelling, evidence-based case for how you would — we're open to being convinced by a strong plan as much as a strong resume.
- You understand — or are a fast, humble learner about — how nonprofit, member-governed organizations actually work: that a Board and volunteer leadership shape the pace and shape of change, and that earning a mandate is different from being handed one.
- Ideally, you've worked in the association world before and know firsthand how to partner with a governance board and volunteer leadership — but a fast, demonstrated ability to learn this world is a real alternative to having lived it.
- You're motivated by ownership of a clear, high-stakes problem, not just a well-run department.

What You Bring

- 7–10+ years of progressively senior leadership experience in meetings, conferences, events, or a comparable large-scale operational function
- A track record of developing and leading high-performing teams
- Experience owning budgets, contract negotiations, and financial performance for a significant event or events lineup
- Strong instincts for what makes an event a place people want to be — brand, experience design, and programming, not just logistics
- Comfort operating at the executive level: influencing a Board, partnering with an Executive Director, and representing the organization externally
- Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree, CMP, CAE, or equivalent certification a plus

Why This Role

You'll be joining at a time when the organization has already established a clear direction for the meetings and events portfolio. Management has identified priorities around attendance growth, revenue performance, and measuring event success, providing a strong foundation for the next leader to build upon and refine. That's rare. Most events leaders spend years trying to get organizational buy-in just to start. Here, the mandate exists; what's needed is the executive who can turn it into reality, in partnership with a Board and volunteer community that genuinely wants this to succeed.

How to Apply

Submit your resume along with a brief note on one event, program, or experience you've been part of building — and what you'd want to know first about IAAO's Annual Conference before proposing what comes next.

To apply, send your resume, a cover letter, and your salary expectations to Stephanie Whitcher at whitcher@iaao.org.