DECUS
State Based Events Planning Guide

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DECUS Australia Inc.

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This document draws upon the past efforts and experiences of several people including the author, and reflects the current goals and business practices of DECUS Australia Inc.

Contents

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

1 Purpose of this Document

This document serves two major roles:

i. To guide User Groups in the planning and execution of a successful State Based Event. "Successful" means that the Event will
   a) provide a valuable and enjoyable service to DECUS members; and
   b) return a profit to the DECUS treasury.

ii. To guide the organising committees of said Events to prepare a Business Plan and Budget which will be acceptable to the DECUS Board. NO Event can proceed without advance approval.

2 What is a State Based Event?

These are DECUS events which have a regional focus, are conducted over 1-2 days and for which attendance fees are charged. A State Based Event should have the following objectives:

- To provide a local, high-quality forum for members of DECUS Australia Inc. who are not generally able to attend the annual DECUSworld Symposium.
- To foster increased awareness of DECUS amongst all users of Digital Equipment Corporation systems and software.
- To foster increased awareness of DECUS amongst the employees of Digital Equipment Corporation (Australia) Pty. Ltd.
- To encourage communication between DIGITAL and its customers.
- To provide an opportunity for the development of informal DECUS benefits (personal contact etc.).
- To maintain and enhance the DECUS reputation for providing informative, friendly gatherings for computing professionals.
- To be self-funding.

A State Based Event can be held anywhere in the geographic area covered by DECUS Australia Inc., including areas not covered by a formally-recognised Local User Group. However, it will be difficult to have a successful event without the support base of one or more User Groups whether they be LUGs, SIGs or some other recognised group of DECUS members.

2.1 Pre-Requisites

This brings us to the basic requirements which need to be met before one or more User Groups should consider hosting a State Based Event.

2.1.1 Organising Committee

Firstly, you will need an Organising Committee, whose members should include the Chairman or Chairmen of the local User Group(s). In addition the Committee should have at least two other members who can be relied upon to assist the User Group Chairman to perform his or her duties.

In addition to the User Group members the Committee will include the following persons, who will provide assistance where necessary:

- DECUS Australia Events Manager
- DECUS Australia Board Director for State Based Events
- DIGITAL representative for your User Group.

The responsibilities of each Committee member are summarised below.

2.1.1.1 Chair

The Committee Chairman has the major responsibility for ensuring the Event is successful. The role includes the following duties:

- To chair meetings of the Committee.
- To produce a Report for each DECUS Board meeting and User Council meeting as requested.
- To attend the Site Visit.

Other duties for which the Chairman is responsible but which should be performed in conjunction with other members of the Committee or delegated to Committee members include:

- To produce the Business Plan and Budget.
- To coordinate the preparation of the Timetable.
- To solicit speakers.
- To coordinate session chairs.

2.1.1.2 General Members

These will be members of the User Group(s) who can be relied upon to undertake the duties placed upon them by the Committee Chairman. Generally, these members will be required to solicit papers and speakers for the Event, and to assist the Chairman as necessary.

PLEASE NOTE that at least two (2) general members are required. This is so that the Chairman has adequate backup both to perform the required tasks and to take over if the Chairman is unable to continue in the role.

2.1.1.3 DIGITAL Representative

If the Event is to include speakers from DIGITAL or to rely upon DIGITAL for facilities, staff etc., a senior employee from the local DIGITAL office will be required on the Committee. (Where there is no local office, the assistance of an official DIGITAL Business Partner or Reseller should be sought instead.)

The DIGITAL representative will be the liaison between the Committee and DIGITAL and is responsible for the sourcing of DIGITAL speakers and equipment.

2.1.1.4 DECUS Events Manager

The Events Manager is responsible for the administration of all aspects of the Event which require financial transactions. This includes coordination of venue, catering, accommodation, travel, and registrations. Some of these tasks will be performed by other staff within the DECUS Office, but this will be at the discretion of the Events Manager.

Specifically, the Events Manager:

- handles all finances
- coordinates a shortlist of potential venues
- coordinates DECUS staff
- implement decisions made by the Committee
- liaises with the chosen venue to finalise meeting room, accommodation and catering requirements
- provides a report on the Event and finances to the Board Director.

2.1.1.5 Board Director

The Board Director liaises with the DECUS Board and User Council to oversee the running of the Event, and can assist with the sourcing of speakers and sponsorship.

The Board Director will provide guidance in the preparation of the Business Plan and Budget prior to the submission of those documents to the DECUS Board for final approval.

2.2 Theme & Format

The second pre-requisite is an idea of the overall theme of your event and the number of registrations you can expect. Clearly the choice of theme will affect the number of actual registrations.

The theme should be one which is of current interest to DECUS members and should lend itself to a mixture of "management" and "technical" presentations so as to attract the largest possible audience.

A typical State Based Event will run for between one and two days and include a major social function (e.g. dinner) to further enhance the social nature of DECUS gatherings.

Some guidelines for determining a successful mix of theme, format and venue are given in a later section.

2.2.1 Timetable

The layout of the timetable will largely be determined by the number of streams and the duration of your Event. The following suggestions are offered as guide:

- don't start papers earlier than 8:30am, preferably 9am or even 9:30am on Sunday
- don't go later than 5:30pm or so, especially when there is a social function following in the evening
- allow approximately 20 minutes per morning/afternoon tea break and one hour for lunch

- allow 5 minutes changeover time between presentations, longer if the next speaker will have to set up equipment
- a good paper length is 45 minutes, and this makes the timetabling job easier when having more than one stream
- no paper should be longer than 90 minutes, unless you have reason to believe it will be an especially exciting or interesting presentation.

Remember that the DECUS Office has all the facilities to produce the printed timetable; all you have to do is supply the speaker & paper details and determine the order of papers.

3 Event Planning Schedule

The Event must not clash with the annual DECUSworld Symposium, nor with any other State Based Event. Also, certain times of the year tend to result in poor attendance, e.g. December-January and Easter. School Holidays should be avoided unless the venue is a recognised holiday destination and you are confidant that your attendees will be happy to go there.

It is the responsibility of the User Council to coordinate the timing of the various Events throughout the year and therefore one of the first tasks of the organising Committee will be to contact the User Council to determine when the Event can take place.

Furthermore, the planning process must begin early enough to ensure that all requirements of the Business Plan and Budget will be met (see Section II).

The following is suggested as a timeline for the planning process. The asterisks (****) indicate breakpoints beyond which progress depends upon approval of the DECUS Board.

Month	Item	Activity
-10	1	Form the Organising Committee
	2	Prepare brief proposal describing theme, format and expected number of attendees, and suggested date of Event
	3	Submit proposal to User Council for scheduling and notification to DECUS Board
-9	4	User Council confirms requested date or suggested alternatives
	5	DECUS Board grants provisional approval, subject to acceptance of Business Plan and Budget
		***
-8	6	Determine proposed topics & speakers for event and prepare draft timetable
	7	Prepare list of requirements for venue (e.g. meeting rooms, A/V)
	8	Provide information to DECUS office including Event date, names of Committee members, format, venue requirements
	9	Seek potential sponsors
-7	10	Prepare marketing plan in conjunction with DECUS office and DECUS Board Director
	11	Submit draft Business Plan and Budget to DECUS Board Director
	12	Source speaker gifts if appropriate
-6	13	Refine Business Plan and Budget in consultation with Board Director.
-5	14	Finalise speaker list
	15	Finalise A/V requirements
	16	Events Manager to confirm venue selection and venues for social functions
-4	17	Submit final Business Plan and Budget to DECUS Board
	18	Events coordinator to finalise details with venue
-3	19	Produce Registration Kit (includes timetable)
	20	Board approval of Business Plan and Budget
		***
	21	Distribute Registration Kit
-2	22	DECUS office begins to process registrations
	23	DECUS office sends speaker confirmation letters
-1	24	DECUS office confirms attendee figures with venue(s)
	25	DECUS office sends registration confirmation letters to attendees
0	26	EVENT TAKES PLACE
+1	27	Committee Chairman prepares report for DECUS Board Director, with input from DECUS Events coordinator.
	28	Thank-you letters sent to speakers (optional).

4 DECUS Office

The above Schedule places many duties on the DECUS Office. The office is there to provide administrative facilities at all stages from planning through to execution of the State Based Event.

The Events Manager or an appointed delegate is required to attend the Event.

4.1 Infrastructure

The DECUS Office houses the events management software which provides facilities for production of timetable and registration kits; handling attendee registrations and production of badges; payment of invoices from suppliers; and generation of financial and status reports for the organising Committee.

In addition, the office can set up an electronic mailing list to facilitate communication between members of the organising Committee.

4.2 Process

The DECUS Office should be brought in at an early stage in the planning process. The staff there can assist in the selection of venues for the Event itself as well as for social functions. This assistance takes several forms:

- production of a shortlist of venues with suitable facilities
- using DECUS' "buying power" to negotiate a fair price for the venue
- once the final venue(s) have been chosen, the office will handle the bookings and payment; this will include an investigation to ensure that the event will not be interrupted by other activities at the chosen venue.

ONLY THE DECUS EVENTS MANAGER CAN ENTER INTO ANY CONTRACTUAL OR OTHER FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS. DECUS User Groups do not have any authority to make financial promises on behalf of DECUS.

For the office to be able to satisfactorily perform these functions, the organising Committee will have to provide details such as

- expected attendance
- required number of meeting rooms and A/V facilities
- required accommodation for attendees
- desired format of meals and other social functions.

Of course, not all of the above will be known at once. The key thing to remember is that the office should be kept in the picture at all times so that as the format of the Event is refined the office can make the appropriate arrangements.

5 Some Advice on Theme, Venue and Format

The typical State Based Event takes place over a weekend and includes some or all of these features:

Friday evening — BBQ and welcome from Committee Chairman
Saturday — presentations
Saturday evening — Dinner
Sunday — presentations
Sunday afternoon — closing function

Each User Group is free to determine how its event is structured and the DECUS Board will look favourably upon any proposal with sufficient justification. However, the above is a format which has been found to work well and you may be encouraged to modify your plans if you envisage a major deviation. For example, a State Based Event which includes more than two days of presentations or takes place during normal business hours is less likely to get approval simply because of the logistical difficulties involved.

5.1 Choosing a Theme

The major theme of the event should be one which is likely to attract a healthy number of attendees while still lending itself to the central focus of DECUS, i.e. there should be some involvement of DIGITAL's products and services.

If your theme is one which is likely to appeal to "non-DIGITAL" audience, and you intend to market it outside the DECUS community, be careful that you don't discourage those potential attendees who aren't DIGITAL users. For example, you might like emphasise the multi-vendor nature of your papers or presenters.

5.2 The Venue

Over the years State Based Events (and before them, the DECUS Workshops) have been held in many types of venues and locations, from University campuses to hotels, in the city and the country. Each has its advantages and drawbacks so the choice comes down to a balancing act between cost, features, tourist attractions and accessibility.

Here are some possibilities which you might like to consider.

5.2.1 Hotel/Conference Centre

Choosing a hotel or conference centre offers free & easy access (important for a weekend event) but tends to be more expensive. Also, be careful to check that the prospective hotel or conference centre has all the A/V requirements which you may need. This can even extend to the availability of Internet connectivity for use during presentations as well as by attendees.

A hotel or conference centre works very well when the Event is to be held in a rural centre (or at least outside the capital city) and usually provides attractions for the families of conference attendees.

5.2.2 University or TAFE

Tertiary education was the mainstay of DECUS in Australia for many years and these venues are usually very well equipped in terms of lecture theatres, A/V and Internet connectivity (although the latter may not always be available in the lecture theatres). Many tertiary institutions are affiliated with residential colleges (or even have their own on-campus accommodation) which are suitable for interstate or distant visitors. They also tend to be comparatively inexpensive.

However, access to these facilities may be restricted on weekends and it may well prove to be difficult to obtain a satisfactory level of service without having a member of staff on the organising Committee.

5.2.3 DIGITAL & Business Partners

More than one State Based Event has been held in the offices of Digital Equipment Corporation or a Business Partner. These venues typically have reasonable A/V facilities (for general customer presentations) but Internet access is not guaranteed. The one major factor in their favour is that they will usually be provided free of charge which can remove a major fixed cost from the Budget.

On the other hand, being business premises there may be problems with after hours access. Furthermore, if your theme is intended to be attractive to computing professionals who would not normally take part in DECUS, you may have to be careful about your promotion. Some of these attendees may be deterred by such close involvement of a major vendor (i.e. DIGITAL) because they fear a vendor-specific sales seminar.

5.2.4 Other

It is possible that User Group members may have venues of their own, either business or private, which lend themselves to a State Based Event. It is likely that such venues will be provided at minimal or no cost to the Event but be aware of issues such as facilities, access and suitability as discussed above.

Private (i.e. non-business) premises may offer all the facilities you require but their public liability insurance may not apply when the premises are used for business purposes (such as a DECUS event).

5.2.5 Accommodation for Speakers and Attendees

Some venues will be able to provide suitable accommodation as part of "conference package", e.g. hotels and some Universities. If accommodation is to be offered to attendees make sure that it is within easy walking distance of the Event venue (5-10 mins) and not too expensive (i.e. appropriate to the registration fee). The accommodation should include rooms which can sleep two or three people in separate beds as it is not uncommon for DECUS members to share.

You may wish to consider up-market accommodation for visiting speakers but don't isolate them from the attendees if you expect most attendees will be using the recommended accommodation. A major aim of your Event will be to encourage communication between speakers (vendors) and attendees and this will be made difficult if they never get together!

5.3 Format

The conference itself should consist of one to two days of papers, each consisting of one or two streams of presentations. Increasing either the number of days or the number of streams can significantly increase the logistics and cost of the event, and of course tends to increase the number of papers required.

You should include plenty of opportunity for attendees to get together informally in a friendly atmosphere, and there should be at least one structured social event, i.e. a dinner. Social activities are a major strength of DECUS and indeed DECUS Australia is renowned throughout the global DECUS community for the quality and value offered by its social gatherings.

5.4 Evaluation Form

It is customary to provide attendees (and sometimes speakers, too) with an evaluation form so that they can provide feedback on the Event. This information is used in the planning of future State Based Events to guide us on what formats work and don't work, which speakers offer the best papers, and the selection of venue.

A sample form is included at the end of this Guide.

SECTION II - PREPARING THE BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

No DECUS State Based Event can proceed without the approval of the DECUS Board. Such approval is based largely on the Business Plan and Budget which must be prepared with sufficient rigour to allay any fears about the viability of the Event.

Draft versions of these documents must be prepared early in the planning process and submitted to the Events Manager and Board Director for their scrutiny. It is quite likely that one or two revisions will be required before they can be submitted for final approval by the DECUS Board.

Samples of the Business Plan and Budget are attached to this Guide. The remainder of this Section details the information which must be supplied or details which must be clarified in order to prepare a Business Plan and Budget which will be acceptable to the DECUS Board.

6 Budget Overview

The role of the budget is to demonstrate that the State Based Event will return a profit to DECUS, and then to measure that profit when the Event is completed. To do this it will have to balance realistic levels of income against the likely expenses.

6.1 Income

There are two primary sources of income -- registration fees and sponsorship.

6.1.1 Registration Fees

Registration fees should be set at a level which is high enough to ensure financial viability but not so high as to deter attendance. Typically the fee structure will include the following:

- *Early fee* (sometimes referred to as the *base fee*): this is the standard fee to be paid by DECUS individual members.
- *Full fee*: for registrations by DECUS individual members after a specified date (e.g. two weeks prior to the event), typically 10% - 20% surcharge on the early fee.
- *Corporate fee*: for employees of DECUS Corporate members. This is usually slightly less than the early fee, e.g. 80% - 90% of the early fee.
- *Student fee*: for full-time students, e.g. 70% of the early fee.
- *Non-member fee*: for those who are not DECUS members, typically the full fee plus a figure which exceeds the DECUS membership fee, e.g. the membership fee plus 40%.

Note:

1. A DECUS member is someone who has paid their DECUS membership fee for the calendar year in which the State Based Event is to take place.
2. The Corporate Fee may be claimed only by employees of the Corporate member and who are themselves members of DECUS in their own right.

3. The non-member fee should be set so as to encourage non-members to join DECUS.

A reasonable guide to setting the early fee is to determine how many attendees you can reasonably expect, and then set the fee to a value which ensures the Event will break even with half that number of attendees.

6.1.2 Sponsorship

Sponsorship can take several different forms, from cash to services in kind. Up-front cash is always useful but be careful that there are no conditions placed upon it. For example, a sponsor who requires a refund in the event that there are less than a specified number of attendees should be accepted only with caution.

All offers of sponsorship must be confirmed in writing by the prospective sponsors and must be submitted to the DECUS Board for approval if the prospective sponsors have placed conditions upon their sponsorship.

Where goods or services are provided at no charge they should be written into the budget as an expense equal to the normal value of the goods or services plus sponsorship income of equal value. For that matter, there should be a sponsorship item in the Budget against *every* expense, even if the values of each sponsorship is initially set to $0.00. This will make it easy to update the Budget if and when sponsorship is received.

If a sponsor is offering to offset a variable cost by a fixed amount (e.g. a fixed contribution to the overall cost of a meal) you may encounter problems if the number of attendees at that function causes the costs to exceed the value of the sponsorship.

Sponsors are permitted to provide some form of advertising at the Event but make sure you have a solid understanding of what form that advertising will take; material which has not been approved or which is likely to detract from the “non-commercial” nature of DECUS can be refused.

Be realistic about the amounts of money to expect. A sponsor may be willing to contribute $1000 or more to an event which caters for 100 people, but not to a gathering of only 40 or so.

6.2 Expenses

The event will have two major types of expenses, fixed and variable. Both must be clearly shown in the Budget.

6.2.1 Fixed Expenses

These are expenses which are independent of the number of attendees. This can include:

- hire of the venue
- hire of A/V equipment
- promotion
- deposits for meals etc.
- travel & accommodation for DECUS Events Manager
- DECUS office administrative support
- contingency

Any or all of the above are possible candidates for sponsorship. If the venue is a DIGITAL office then it is likely the venue and A/V equipment will be supplied free of charge, in which case a sponsorship amount of equivalent value should be written into the Budget (see above).

6.2.2 Variable Expenses

These are almost exclusively the cost of meals for attendees, but are not always directly proportional to the actual number of attendees. For example, a dinner venue will usually be booked for a certain number of diners and will likely charge for that number even if fewer actually attend.

If accommodation is to be offered in conjunction with the Event, it should be offered on the basis that the venue organises the accommodation at no cost to the Society (i.e. it deals directly with the attendee making the booking). This minimises the load on the DECUS Office and gives maximum flexibility to attendees.

6.2.3 Partner Expenses

The Event should welcome partners of delegates to attend social functions such as the evening Dinner. The pricing of tickets for partners to these functions should ensure that the cost of the partner's meal is covered and possibly even exceeded. The Budget should not subsidise partner meal tickets at the expense of other delegates.

6.2.4 Complementary Registrations

In general it is undesirable to hand out complementary (i.e. no-fee) registrations, even to members of the organising Committee. However, should complementary registrations be considered necessary (e.g. for a special speaker or two), it should be remembered that such registrations are a cost to the Event and should be entered into the Budget as such. (In particular, these people can be expected to eat and drink as much as anyone else and are therefore consuming meals which have not otherwise been paid for.) The same applies when speakers are invited to social functions even though the speakers have not paid registration fees.

6.3 Summary

The key to formulating a good Budget is to itemise the expenses and incomes and to ensure that the income will meet the expenses. Sponsorship should be sought so that the financial success of the Event is assured and/or to enable the registration fee to be lowered to encourage attendance.

7 Business Plan Overview

The Business Plan serves several purposes:

- it describes the State Based Event and associated activities
- it justifies the assumptions and figures shown in the Budget
- it details the risks and liabilities should the Event fail to perform as expected, and the steps taken to ensure that the Event will not fail.

The Business Plan will be submitted to the DECUS Board along with the Budget and both will be subject to close scrutiny. Permission to proceed with the State Based Event will not be given if the DECUS Board does not approve of either.

The following paragraphs cover the details which are required in the Business Plan.

7.1 Objective

State the objectives of your State Based Event. The following two objectives are mandatory (although the wording can vary):

- To provide a valuable and enjoyable educational experience to DECUS members
- To return a profit to DECUS Australia Incorporated.

Remember, a DECUS function must be both useful to DECUS members and should be enjoyable at the same time.

7.2 Theme

State the overall theme of your State Based Event, including the name you intend to give it for promotional purposes and an explanation of how you expect that theme to be of interest to a sufficient number of members.

7.3 Venue

State the venue to be used for the main presentations for the Event. In some cases this won't be known until the Business Plan and Budget are submitted for final approval, but you should at least be able to specify the type of venue (hotel, university, office, etc.) and its geographic location (city, holiday spot, rural centre, etc.), together with a shortlist of suitable venues.

The Business Plan should address the following points:

- if after-hours access restrictions apply, explain how they will be overcome
- how many will the venue comfortably hold
- what is the maximum number of attendees the venue will hold
- is accommodation being offered as part of the registration, or a particular accommodation venue being recommended.

7.4 Format

Describe the overall structure of the event - number of days, number of streams, summary of social functions. A complete Timetable helps enormously.

7.5 Meals and Social Activities

List the meal breaks (including morning and afternoon teas) and other social functions, indicating those to which partners of delegates will be invited.

If a function is to have a structure (e.g. after-dinner speaker) provide details.

7.6 Promotion

State the steps to be taken for promotion of the State Based Event. Suitable promotional activities include:

- distribution of the Registration Kit to User Group members in the relevant geographical region(s)
- use of electronic mailing lists and the World Wide Web
- advertising in the print media (local newspapers, Tuesday ‘Australian’, “diary” columns in computer magazines)
- internal promotion within DIGITAL
- promotion within the workplaces of DECUS members
- advertising on notice boards of tertiary institutions (be careful to obtain permission first!)
- listing with local tourism/convention authorities.

In addition, the Business Plan should include some provision for intense, last-minute promotion if warranted by lower-than-expected registration figures.

All costs associated with promotion should be included in the Budget. No promotional activity should be performed unless it can be expected to return at least as much in registration fees than it costs to undertake.

7.7 Financial Standing

The Budget is the primary demonstration of the financial standing of the State Based Event. The Budget should have a break-even point of half the number of expected attendees.

7.7.1 Sponsorship

If the Budget includes sponsorship income, the Business Plan should show exactly what sponsors are receiving for their sponsorship and how they expect those moneys to be used. The Plan should show any special conditions attached to sponsorship (e.g. dependence on a minimum number of attendees).

7.7.2 Registration Fees

State the registration fees to be charged and demonstrate how they were arrived at. If there are several different fees, show how and why those fees were arrived at, and what impact you expect the variation in fee to have upon attendance.

Fees for social activities (including those activities to which partners are invited) should be set so that the cost of those activities is covered or exceeded by the fees. In particular, partner fees for activities should not be subsidised by delegates.

Persons for whom the registration fee is to be waived should be identified, citing the reasons why. *In general, complementary registrations are undesirable.* If registration fees are to be waived in exchange for services or other activities, state what steps will be taken to ensure completion of the services or activities. In particular the Business Plan should indicate if speakers and/or sponsors are to receive complementary registrations.

Give some indication of the number of people who have already expressed an interest in attending the event.

7.7.3 Liabilities

List the financial liabilities which exist should the State Based Event have to be cancelled. These may depend upon the time of the cancellation. For example, many venues will impose a non-refundable deposit. In many cases a social function will be charged for the number of delegates booked in, not the number who actually attended.

7.7.4 Risk

In addition to the financial liabilities shown above, there may be an intangible risk in the event of cancellation. For example, sponsors and speakers may seriously reconsider their future involvement with DECUS; or DECUS members and other prospective attendees may decide that DECUS is not a suitable forum for their interests.

The Business Plan should identify sponsors or speakers who are making special efforts to support the Event and are likely to hold DECUS in disrepute if the Event does not perform as expected or is even cancelled.

SECTION III - ON THE DAY

The State Based Event is approved, speakers lined up, registrations in and you're ready to roll. There are few matters which will need to be taken care of to ensure the Event runs smoothly on the day.

It is important to remember that many attendees at State Based Events have little or no previous contact with DECUS, so the conduct of the Event is an ideal forum to introduce prospective and new members to DECUS and to ensure they have a favourable impression by the time they leave. "A happy customer becomes a repeat customer!"

8 Setup

The day before the Event, or at least in the hours before attendees arrive, set up signage etc. if such is necessary. At the very least you will need some signs outside the venue to point attendees in the right direction.

Ask the DECUS Events Manager to provide the large DECUS banner which can be hung up in a prominent location, thus reinforcing to attendees that they are in the right place.

The Events Manager will also bring a list of the attendees and pre-printed name badges. These badges serve two purposes: they identify attendees to each other, and they allow you to screen out persons who have not registered and might otherwise get a "free ride".

All local members of the organising Committee, plus the Events Manager (or the appointed delegate) should inspect the venue immediately prior to the arrival of the first attendees to ensure that the venue is accessible, all facilities are set up as required and signage is clearly visible. The Events Manager will also wish to set up a registration desk.

You should decide in advance how you wish attendees to be seated, and make the appropriate arrangements. If you have a large number of attendees for the size of the function room, or are using a lecture theatre, then theatre-style seating (rows of chairs) is suitable. If you have a relatively small number of attendees you may prefer to seat them at tables. A U-shape arrangement of tables is very good when there is a lot of space to fill.

8.1 Audio-Visual

Ensure that all A/V aids are setup and functional as requested. Most speakers will provide their presentations in electronic format, either Powerpoint or WWW, so a PC and overhead projector with LCD panel (or other projection device) will be essential. An overhead projector is still useful for rough sketches and notes, and paper sheets or whiteboards can also be used in smaller rooms. The use of 35mm slides is comparatively rare.

You may wish to consider the use of microphones (lapel or fixed) if the room warrants it, but they are usually unnecessary.

9 Arrival of Speakers and Attendees

All speakers and attendees should have received a confirmation letter which includes details such as venue and accommodation (if it was part of the registration package).

If you have arranged for international speakers it would be appropriate for the User Group Chairman to meet the speaker at the airport and escort them to their hotel(s). A similar service can be offered to interstate speakers or the Events Manager if you feel it is warranted.

9.1 Welcoming Reception

If your Event is to include a welcoming reception make sure that everyone knows about it. You may like to invite speakers to this function but the associated cost must be budgeted for if those speakers are not paying a registration fee.

The reception makes a good opportunity to outline the format for the rest of the Event and also gives all attendees a chance to get to know each other in an informal atmosphere.

10 The First Session

The first session provides another opportunity to welcome attendees and outline the Event format. This should be done even if you had a welcoming reception because not all attendees will have taken part in it.

The sessions are typically in a different venue to the social functions and so this is the time to advise attendees of particular features of the venue with which they should be familiar, e.g. process for entering and leaving the building, location of toilets, etc. In particular, all DECUS events are NON SMOKING and you should direct smokers to an area where they will not inconvenience non-smokers (usually this is outside the building).

11 Meals

Try to ensure that meal breaks are taken when scheduled. This helps the caterers to serve you better and prevents the Event from descending into chaos. This is particularly true for the Lunch break which is often run to a tight schedule by the venue or caterer (and helps ensure that everyone gets a hot meal if one is on offer).

The last session of the day should finish in time for everyone to get to the social function which typically concludes each day. If your main Dinner is to be at all formal you will have to allow time for attendees to get home (or to their accommodation), change and return to the dinner venue.

12 At the End

At the end of the last session for the Event, make a point of thanking your speakers and attendees for coming along and making it the success it was.

Allow a short time for your attendees to fill out the evaluation forms before collecting them; these forms can then be given to the Events Manager who will compile them into a report back in the DECUS office.

If you are having a closing social function remind your attendees about it and how to get there before letting them go.

Once the attendees have departed you should assist the Events Manager in any last-minute tidy up or administrative duties. This may be especially important when the Event is being held on private or business premises other than a hotel/convention centre or University, as they owners of those premises have likely inconvenienced themselves to make them available.