

So, You Want to be a Meeting and Convention Planner
Communication Studies Department

<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

Overview: Meetings and conventions bring people together for a common purpose, and meeting and convention planners work to ensure that this purpose is achieved seamlessly. Meeting planners coordinate every detail of meetings and conventions, from the speakers and meeting location to arranging for printed materials and audio-visual equipment.

The work of meeting and convention planners may be considered either stressful or energizing, but there is no question that it is fast-paced and demanding. Planners oversee multiple operations at one time, face numerous deadlines, and orchestrate the activities of several different groups of people. Meeting and convention planners spend the majority of their time in offices; but during meetings, they work on-site at the hotel, convention center, or other meeting location. They travel regularly to attend meetings and to visit prospective meeting sites. The extent of travel depends upon the type of organization for which the planner works. Local and regional organizations require mostly regional travel, while national and international organizations require travel to more distant locales, including travel abroad.

Education and training: Many employers prefer applicants who have a bachelor's degree, but this is not always required. The proportion of planners with a bachelor's degree is increasing because the work and responsibilities are becoming more complex. Planners have backgrounds in a variety of disciplines, but some useful undergraduate majors are marketing, public relations, communications, business, and hotel or hospitality management. Individuals who have studied hospitality management may start out with greater responsibilities than those with other academic backgrounds.

Other qualifications. Meeting and convention planners must have excellent written and verbal communications skills and interpersonal skills. They must be detail-oriented with excellent organizational skills, and they must be able to multi-task, meet tight deadlines, and maintain composure under pressure in a fast-paced environment. Quantitative and analytic skills are needed to formulate and follow budgets and to understand and negotiate contracts.

Job Outlook: Employment of meeting and convention planners is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations over the 2006-16 decade. Some additional job openings will arise from the need to replace workers who leave the workforce or transfer to other occupations. Opportunities will be best for individuals with a bachelors degree and some meeting planning experience.

For More Information: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos298.htm>

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook