

Information Services Coordinator (ISC): Local Arrangements Task Force

Responsible for (a) Greeter/Ask Me staff recruited by General Assembly and Conference Services (GACS) Administrator/Volunteer Coordinator and (b) the provision of information about local restaurants and events that would be of interest to GA participants.

The Information Services function offers both information and hospitality. The basic purpose is to welcome UUs to General Assembly, direct people to GA events, and provide information about the host city/area. Long after GA is over, UUs will refer to it by the host city name (not the year) and remember the atmosphere created by volunteers.

Research shows (and we know intuitively) that the first contact a person has on reaching a destination or attending a convention has a significant impact on how that person will experience the next few days. If a UU arrives at GA and is met by a friendly volunteer and goes through a smooth registration process, that person will most likely view the first days of GA as a welcoming experience. Information Services volunteers have an important role to fill. Not everyone will have a smooth entry into GA, but everyone should encounter friendly, helpful volunteers.

Deadlines for the position are listed below. *If the local folk decide to provide more than the expectations as listed for this position, e.g., pre-GA tours, home hospitality, then that work will have to be parceled out accordingly. In collaboration with the LAC, clarify when (by what specific dates) the GACS will want promotional materials with all details to be available on line.*

--Greeter/Ask Me function--

The Greeter/Ask Me volunteers stand and the people at the Local Information table sit. It is helpful to offer volunteer workers the option of trading between the two roles with greeters being able to ask to be relieved by someone from the information table when they get too tired.

Most of the Information Services volunteers will be stationed around the GA site (possibly including the airport) to welcome UUs and help orient them to the area. They will remain in high traffic areas during GA to direct UUs to various events and attempt to answer a wide variety of questions. They will need to be readily identifiable—wearing volunteer shirts, possibly special hats, and carrying signs. Generating signs, poles, hats, etc. is the responsibility of the Information Services Coordinator. Greeter/Ask Me folk need to carry a GA Program and be familiar with the layout of all GA spaces, both in the convention center and in the hotel(s).

Greeters at Airport (if used)

The decision about stationing greeters at the airport should be made in consultation with the Local Arrangements Task Force Chair and the Director of GACS. Generally, arrivals are Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Volunteers should be easy to identify (wearing volunteer t-shirts and standing or sitting in a visible place with a sign) and not be shy about going up to people who may be UUs. (Volunteer t-shirts are given to each volunteer when they arrive at GA. The Information Services Coordinator is not involved in ordering them.) All Greeters should keep in mind that travelers are more than likely tired and somewhat bewildered. They may have come from a different climate or time zone and may have experienced delays or lost luggage.

Besides providing a warm UU welcome to their city, airport greeters should be knowledgeable about what modes of transportation are available to take travelers to hotels (with special attention to fully accessible transportation) and the costs associated with those various modes.

Greeter/Ask Me Volunteers

Greeter/Ask Me volunteers, with signs, hats, stickers, or name tags identifying them, stand in high traffic areas and provide directions primarily to GA events. Actually, they will be asked all sorts of questions. Their presence is greatly appreciated by persons attending GA, especially during the first few days.

Greeter/Ask Me volunteers should be stationed at intersections or locations where they can best give directions to GA events ("Turn left here for plenary session," "Down the hall on your right for exhibits," etc.). They should be familiar with the layout of the hotel/convention center and keep a GA Program with them. Answers to most questions can be found in the Program, but it takes time to learn to use it quickly and effectively. People attending GA tend to figure this out by the third day. Greeter/Ask Me volunteers should spend a little extra time and figure it out on the first day and be ahead of everybody else.

Mobile Greeter/Ask Me

It's a good idea to have some Greeter/Ask Me volunteers in the Registration area on Wednesday and Thursday to support the Registration volunteers by welcoming people and directing them to the appropriate registration line.

It is also important to have Greeter/Ask Me folk at the convention center entrances for the Sunday morning worship service since the service is open to the public.

Supplies

- Identifiers for the Greeter/Ask Me volunteers

About signs:

- If your Greeter/Ask Me volunteers will be carrying signs to identify them, you will need to create signs that say Greeter or Ask Me and attach them to six- or eight-foot lightweight poles.
- The UUA has a number of pre-made directional signs that will be stationed on easels throughout the convention center. If you believe additional signs are needed, bring this to the attention of the GACS Director.
- A Local Information sign (UUA sign board on an easel) will be provided by GACS. If there will be an Events bulletin board behind the Local Information table, it is helpful to have a large "Local Information" sign on this bulletin board.

- During GA, you may find that additional signs are needed. These ad hoc signs can be made on-site in the Volunteer Office by the Administrative Assistant.

--Local Information function—

The Information Services Coordinator (ISC) maintains a table, usually staffed by two to three volunteers, in a prominent place. Useful information covers eating places, banquet facilities, local transportation, tourist attractions, emergency services, and nearby services such as drug stores, laundry, barber shops, grocery stores, liquor stores, gas stations, hardware stores, AA meetings, etc. Frequently the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has a space and is prepared to provide much of this information and sometimes even help with restaurant reservations. This does not preclude the need for a UU presence that is prepared to respond to many of the same questions at the Local Information table as well as being prepared to respond to requests for resources that may not be a prime focus for the convention center folks. The Information Services Coordinator should contact the Director of GACS to obtain the contact information of the CVB event manager who can assist in providing maps and helpful information for the Local Information table.

Volunteers at this table are often asked questions about location of GA events. Volunteers should be familiar with the GA Program book and should know where most meeting rooms are in the convention center and hotel(s). Many questions are answered in the Information section of the Program book which also lists the location of all GA events. The GA Program book will be available online in May, and printed copies will be distributed at GA when people register.

Running the Local Information table involves gathering information before GA and staffing the table throughout GA. The table will be very busy at the beginning and then taper off. The table should be staffed more or less the same hours as the Volunteer Office. There is very little traffic during Plenary Sessions or other major events, especially in the evenings. Volunteers should be familiar with the immediate area of the Convention Center.

Bulletin Boards

- **Message Board**—monitored and supplied by Administrative Assistant. The Message Board is placed by the GACS.
- **Events/Announcements Board**—monitored by the Information Services Coordinator. This bulletin board is also placed by the GACS and will be near or at the Information Table. This is a separate bulletin board for announcements, flyers, etc. It can get messy very quickly. Remove announcements for things that have already happened. Any questions about appropriateness? Ask the GACS Director or Administrator.

Location of Local Information table and Bulletin Boards

The GACS staff order and coordinate all equipment that is situated in hallways. They provide a detailed plan to the convention center and decorator company that sets up tables.

Materials needed at Local Information table for reference (all marked "Desk Copy") or distribution. (Please remember that UUA is committed to limiting our carbon footprint; therefore, printed handouts are discouraged.):

- One laptop computer and internet connection are provided by GACS
- Note paper, pens/pencils, highlighters for folks to make notes
- Detailed map(s) (post on bulletin board if available)—generally available from the Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB)
- Public transportation schedules—generally available from the CVB
- Maps/Directions for getting to dorms
- Extra copies of the GA Program book (not to give away but to allow people who have forgotten theirs to look things up)
- Information about restaurants
 - Categories
 - ✓ Types of food
 - ✓ Cost of food
 - ✓ Hours of operation (breakfast, lunch, dinner, weekends)
 - Accessibility
 - ✓ Wheelchair/scooters (consult with Accessibility Coordinator)
 - ✓ Distance from Convention Center
 - Responsiveness to various food preferences
 - ✓ Vegan
 - ✓ Vegetarian
 - ✓ Gluten free
 - Menus (original or photo copy) from nearby restaurants (preferably between plastic sheets in 3-ring binder); note if reservations are required or recommended
- Information about the concessions in the Convention Center
- Banking/Money
 - Banks, Cash Machines, Foreign Currency Exchange
 - Credit Cards—Lost or Stolen
 - ✓ American Express (800) 992-3404
 - ✓ Discover Card (800) 347-2683
 - ✓ Master Card (800) 826-2181
 - ✓ Visa (800) 523-7300
- Medical
 - Urgent Care/Convenience Care Clinic(s)
 - Dentist(s)
 - Doctor(s)
 - Hospital(s)
 - Medical Equipment Rental
 - Optical
- Transportation
 - Parking at/near Convention Center
 - Auto repair
 - Emergency auto service
 - Gas stations
 - Bicycles—routes/maps, service, parking

- Hotels—addresses, phones, and directions for GA-reserved hotels
- Barbershops/Salons
- Bars and Nightlife places
- Bookstores/Library
- Computer supplies and services
- Drug stores and sundries
- Dry cleaners/Laundromat
- Grocery/Health Food/Deli/Convenience Stores
- Hardware store
- Liquor stores
- Lost and found (in the Volunteer Office)
- Office supplies/Photocopying services
- Police/Fire
- Post Office
- Shipping services
- Shopping
- Recreation
 - Nearby parks/greenspaces
 - Regional opportunities
- Support Group Services –AA, 12 Step, A1-Anon/Alateen, etc.
- Wifi hotspots, especially free ones, in and around convention center

GA attendees will expect and ask for information that is by and for people of color and GLBT Q/I people (magazines, newspapers, entertainment, and dining venues, museums, places of historical interest, etc.). *It is important to make a concerted effort to gather this information.*

--What it Takes to Do the Job—

Tips from Previous Coordinators

- Stress attendance at training session.
- Keep training simple; don't try to tour all hotels.
- Review the GA Program book with volunteers, especially the General Information section.
- Give "local information" to volunteers at training.
- Ask for signs from the Administrative Assistant whenever you see a need.
- Remember that scheduling volunteers is a challenging and time consuming task.
- Try to schedule volunteers for shifts of no more than four (4) hours.
- Ask volunteers ahead of time if they are able to stand for fairly long periods of time. Place and schedule accordingly.
- Make a large map of the immediate area of the Convention Center and post on bulletin board.
- Contact all volunteers and find out their arrival/departure times and where they are staying during GA. Also ask about any special requests or restrictions (not work at night, can't stand for extended time, etc.)

- Give volunteers written instructions and map telling how to get to the Convention Center and each hotel or dormitory.
- Consider setting up a way for volunteers to communicate with each other by email before GA. This could be as simple as the Coordinator using a distribution list and forwarding messages from individuals to the whole list. This sort of thing can be helpful in allaying anxiety and generating enthusiasm.
- *Request list of meetings that aren't listed in the GA program from GACS office staff before GA.*

Scheduling Volunteers

Advance scheduling, especially for Greeter/Ask Me volunteers, should be done for time assignments only (usually 4-hour shifts). Make specific location assignments after volunteers arrive. Take into consideration various limitations. Volunteers should check in and receive t-shirts before working. There is little need to schedule Greeter/Ask Me volunteers during the Opening, General Sessions, or any events that most registrants attend with the exception of the need for Greeters at the Convention Center entrances for the Sunday morning Worship Service.

Usually there is heavy arrival on Tuesday and Wednesday. There are rarely any early morning arrivals or airport arrivals after GA starts. Arrival patterns for UUs can be predicted based on the volume of incoming planes at the airport.

Greeter/Ask Me volunteers are very busy on Tuesday (maybe two Greeters and two people at the Information Table) and Wednesday (maybe four Greeters and three to four people at the Information Table) and moderately busy Thursday afternoon and Friday morning. On Friday and Saturday it is possible to place volunteers in locations where they can both greet newcomers (very few) and give directions. With the exception of Greeters at the doors, very few Information Services volunteers are needed on Sunday morning before the Worship Service.

The Local Information table stays fairly consistently busy through Saturday afternoon. It is helpful if volunteers staffing the table live in the area and are familiar especially with the immediate area. The table is usually very busy right after General Sessions. If there are volunteers who want to attend General Sessions, they may be willing to work a short shift at the table after every session.

Mobile hospitality volunteers are especially welcome the first two days of GA to walk around any areas where UUs congregate, such as the registration area.

- **Sample Schedule**

Wed.	Airport ?	Con.Cen.	Roamer
7:30 - 8:00			
8:00 - 8:30			
8:30 - 9:00			
9:00 - 9:30	SP & JM		KP
9:30 - 10:00	SP & JM		KP

etc.	SP & JM	LH & SR	KP
	SP & JM	LH & SR	KP
	SP & JM	LH & SR	KP
	SP & JM	LH & SR	KP
		LH & SR	KP

--Deadlines for Information Services --

January:

- Get prepared to respond to requests for information about banquet facilities in the convention center area from various groups that gather offsite during GA.
- Check with the Director GACS and the Accessibility Coordinator to determine if there is any need for you to provide information about getting from the airport to the convention area to be posted on the GA web site.

February/March:

- Complete GA Registration and Housing Arrangements
- Most of your volunteers are recruited through the GACS office. You may choose to recruit a couple of local folks to work with you on gathering local information. If so, it is your responsibility to BOTH assure that they complete the on-line Volunteer Application form by the end of March AND provide their names to the GACS Administrator/ Volunteer Coordinator.
- Start gathering ideas for local hospitality at GA (tourist brochures, local events of interest, ticket information for performances, websites, etc.)

April:

- Meet with LATF, GAPC, GACS, and other volunteers at April GAPC meeting. This is the first opportunity for all members of the LATF to meet and share with one another what they do on behalf of GA.
- Review Convention Center and hotels for possible stations for Greeter/Ask Me volunteers.
- Start acquiring or making information sheets for Local Information table.
- Gather information on eating places.

May – June:

- Acquire supplies; finish acquiring materials for Local Information table.
- Write to Information Services volunteers (see sample in Documents Packet).
- Assign volunteer schedules; send complete schedule to all; include training session.
- Plan volunteer training (refer to Documents Packet).

At GA:

- Prepare your Local Information table and Events/Announcements bulletin board.

- Conduct volunteer training session(s). Give the disability etiquette suggestions handout to your volunteers (in Documents Packet).
- Attend morning meetings of the LATF as needed.
- Take care of yourself and your volunteers; let the volunteers provide the services.
- Enjoy GA and know that you are an important part of GA

After GA:

- Fill out LATF Member Report (in Documents Packet) and turn in by July 15.
- Send thank you notes to volunteers.
- Relax and know that you were an integral part of a successful GA - and weren't thanked nearly enough.

--Preparations arranged and provided by GACS—

- Recruit most of your volunteer team
- Assign space for orientation (Orientation times are determined by the LATF Chair and Administrative Assistant)
- Determine location of Local Information table and Events bulletin board
- Provide large sign and easel identifying Local Information table
- Provide table(s), chairs, laptop computer and internet connection for Local Information