



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ATTENDING YOUR FIRST CONFERENCE

From GEMM, the Gender Equity in Museums Movement

Use the **5 Things You Need to Know** for information on building and sustaining your career, dealing with gender bias in your workplace, and making change. Share this resource with colleagues and friends.

Conferences can offer invaluable learning and networking experiences, but they can also be overwhelming if you've never attended one before. Here are a few tips and tricks to make sure you can make the most out of your professional development experience!

1. Be Prepared. Check the conference website for early registration discounts and group rates for hotel rooms. Pack a conference survival kit with business cards, reusable water bottle, small snacks, external phone battery, note taking materials—either a notebook and extra pens or computer and charger. Get a headstart on topics of conversation by following social media handles and hashtags related to the conference.

2. How to dress. The type of conference will depend on how professional you need to dress. Check out their website or social media and find pictures to see what people are wearing to make sure you're not over or underdressed. Remember that you will be sitting nearly all day so it is important to look and feel comfortable. Finally, conference centers are notorious for blasting the air conditioning so be sure to bring a sweater or blazer with you.

3. Choosing sessions. This can sometimes feel like the most overwhelming part of a conference, so take your time to create a schedule beforehand and choose a variety of sessions related to your professional goals. Check the conference website to see if there are tracks or suggested sessions specific to your job or interest. If the session you've chosen ends up not meeting your expectations, it is okay to politely sneak out and check out something else. What's important is that you make the most out of your professional development experience.

4. Networking. Conferences are fantastic places to make connections with people in your field from all over the world. Though making conversation with strangers can be a little intimidating, just remember that everyone is at the conference to build their professional skills and network. Keep in mind that you will meet a lot of people throughout the conference so never leave a conversation without exchanging business cards. It can be helpful to write on the back of your new contacts business card what you discussed with them, this will jog your memory when you reach out to them later.

5. Post-conference. A conference will only have lasting impact if you bring your newfound professional skills and network back with you. Take time to review your session notes and share valuable takeaways with your organization. Follow up with new colleagues by connecting on LinkedIn or sending a friendly "nice to meet you" email. You never know where your new connections might lead you!