

PLANNING REGIONAL MEETINGS

COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION TEMPLATES

County Historical Commissions (CHC) are some of our agency's most valued partners. THC's CHC Outreach Program encourages CHCs to meet regionally to discuss challenges and celebrate accomplishments. Please use the information below when planning regional meetings to make the most of these worthwhile efforts.

Perspective for planning meetings with surrounding CHCs

County Historical Commissions (CHC) often gather to share information about ongoing projects and learn more about the history of a county or region. We commonly refer to these gatherings as **CHC regional meetings**. Several CHCs plan and host these educational opportunities throughout the year, and some regions host these meetings on an annual basis.



Recently, one of our more active CHCs tried to schedule a regional meeting but canceled plans when surrounding CHCs didn't respond with interest. While this outcome may be frustrating, **these planning efforts are important** and the individuals responsible should be commended. Regional meetings are the best way learn more about CHCs—the challenges faced and the solutions found.



Going forward, we wanted to share a few **lessons learned** over the years as we've planned regional meetings across Texas.

Top photo of 2019 Mountain-Pecos Regional CHC Meeting; bottom photo of 2019 East Texas Regional CHC Meeting.

Consider the following when planning regional meetings

Strategic planning is critical. The host CHC promoted the regional meeting to surrounding CHCs but established an early registration cut-off date. This approach enabled planners to gauge interest before developing presentations and expending funds to secure venues and food. Although canceling the meeting was disappointing, the decision prevented waste and saved time, energy, and money for future projects.

Common doesn't mean same. We assume that because CHCs share a mission, appointees have similar interests but this may not be the case. Some CHCs diversify and others specialize, which means the focus of each organization may differ. What interests you may or may not interest others, so consider polling surrounding counties to gauge interest in participation and subject matter prior to making final decisions about the meeting. When your neighbors have a portion in the planning, they are more likely to participate in implementation.

CHCs vary in activity levels. CHCs need to 6-12 months' notice to include supplemental activities to an ongoing workload. An overloaded CHC won't be able to add activities to its schedule; an apathetic CHC won't feel the need to attend activities outside its county. If either circumstance applies to CHCs in your region, then even the best regional meeting topic and most accommodating meeting time won't influence participation. So, don't take disinterest personally; be proud for having made the effort!

Timing is up to your region. Some of these groups meet annually but others meet every two years. The timing isn't as important as the consistency with which meetings are held. Select a time of year that avoids major events in the region, and pick a frequency that can be managed given the level of interest.

Share the load. Rotate host responsibilities within the region to ensure that no one CHC is burdened with the time, effort, and money required to provide meetings. And, encourage wide spread participation from year to year by delegating duties! Non-host communities can promote the meeting, carpool to increase attendance, contribute money to share costs, and provide expertise on preservation-related topics.

Final Thoughts for CHCs

Regional meetings are worth the effort! CHC interaction cultivates preservation in your region and across the state. Attending these meetings is one of the best ways for CHC appointees to learn and grow. Even if only a few CHCs attend, all participants will benefit when a constructive program is provided. Concentrate on quality over quantity. Start small and develop relationships that will strengthen over time and increase future attendance.

More CHC-focused articles available here: www.thc.texas.gov/more-publications-chcs

CHC Orientation material here: www.thc.texas.gov/chc-appointee-orientation-content

THC staff recommendations to CHCs here: www.thc.texas.gov/thc-recommendations-chcs

CHC training and workshops noted here: www.thc.texas.gov/chc-training-and-workshops