

A.R.F.O.R.A.

CONGRESS PLANNING MANUAL

ARFORA holds its Annual Congress **on the first weekend in June**, if possible. Typically, the congress is hosted by a parish Ladies Auxiliary.

Each and every Ladies Auxiliary has the opportunity to host a Congress; **the goal for each ladies auxiliary is to be a Congress host at least once every ten years**. Ideally, ARFORA's plan is to have a five-year schedule of Congress sites, so the Ladies Auxiliaries and their delegates can plan ahead to host and/or attend the ARFORA Congress.

There are many advantages to be gained by a ladies auxiliary when it hosts an ARFORA Congress. Only a few are listed below:

1. The host auxiliary will grow in strength and in numbers by involving all its ladies and its church members in this event.
2. The host auxiliary will do its part in assisting the growth of the work of its national organization, ARFORA.
3. The members of the host auxiliary befriend ladies who are delegates of all the ladies auxiliaries from all over the United States.
4. The members of ladies auxiliaries feel they are part of the national team when they help with the work by hosting the Congress and helping ARFORA support such programs as:
 - a. The work of Vatra Românească
 - b. Three scholarship programs for women members of ARFORA
 - c. The Episcopate Mission Fund
 - d. The religious education camps
 - e. The widowed preotese project
 - f. Other worthwhile projects, such as:
 - Seminarian scholarships
 - Upkeep ARFORA house, lăncu kitchen, the Bishop's Mansion at the Vatra
 - Hosting the Episcopate Congress Coffee shop at the Vatra

There are other advantages to be gained locally. The host auxiliary will be recognized in its local religious community. The Orthodox Christian community will strengthen and grow.

The young people of the parish can be involved in the preparations and will become part of your team.

The best way to become familiar with the work done by an organization is to become involved in its activities. If there is anyone in your auxiliary who has not yet attended an ARFORA congress, then that person should definitely attend the next one. Only by seeing the work done by women representing every parish under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America can one truly understand that the ladies auxiliaries, through ARFORA, have been a real support to the Church since 1938. Its good work can only continue if each and every ladies auxiliary supports it. **An excellent way to help is to host one of the ARFORA annual congresses.**

HOW TO BECOME AN A.R.F.O.R.A. CONGRESS HOST

Make certain that you and your auxiliary know what is involved in hosting an ARFORA Congress. Here are a few steps to follow:

1. Your ladies auxiliary President, the Preoteasa, and two of your delegates or alternates should attend the next ARFORA Congress. Announcements of the dates, location and schedule of events of the Congress will be published in the Solia Herald and on the ROEA website.
2. Observe, first hand, the work ARFORA does on your behalf and on behalf of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America.
3. Talk to the members of your auxiliary about the work of ARFORA and ask them to make a bid to host an ARFORA congress. Choose the year that will be best for your auxiliary and present your bid, by letter, to the President of ARFORA at the next ARFORA Congress or mail it to her as soon as you made the decision to host. The name and address of the ARFORA President is in Solia calendar or on the ROEA website. Your letter should confirm that the ladies auxiliary and the Parish Council are in agreement about hosting the Congress.

CONGRESS PLANNING COMMITTEE

When hosting an ARFORA Congress, set up committees. This will ease the burden of hosting. As members of the host ladies auxiliary, you must choose your committee chairpersons wisely. Select reliable and capable people. If your auxiliary is very small, one chairperson could handle more than one committee. If your ladies auxiliary is large, involve as many of the ladies as possible in the planning activities. **THE PLANNING WORK SHOULD START AT LEAST ONE YEAR BEFORE THE EVENT.**

When selecting your committee, choose people who are both willing and capable of doing the tasks required. You will find that most of your members will be pleased to take on a task if they enjoy doing that kind of work.

The officers listed below constitute what is referred to as “table officers”. These people meet on a regular basis to make decisions and to do troubleshooting. However, they may decide that all the committees’ chairpersons should meet with them on a regular basis.

CHAIRPERSON

One person should be in charge so that everyone will know to whom to direct questions. The chairperson may have one or more assistants or a co-chairperson.

TREASURER

The Treasurer should be a person who is capable of keeping reports accurately and can, together with the Planning Committee, set up a budget and work with it.

ARFORA will send you \$500 seed money. It is suggested to open a temporary account at your bank specifically for the ARFORA congress.

SECRETARY

The Secretary should record all major decisions made by the Planning Committee and present updates of progress at each meeting. This person is called Recording Secretary.

Because quite a few letters must be written, your committee may want to elect a Corresponding Secretary whose job it would be to write the letters or send emails. However, if the Chairperson wants to take on the letter-writing duties, a Corresponding secretary may not be required.

AUDITORS

Two auditors should be appointed. These people should not be in the position where they handle any Congress money. An Audit should be done when the records are closed at the end of the Congress.

This group of executive members is responsible for handling a successful congress. It is important for the Congress to be enjoyed by all attendees. Also, **it must be a financial success**. Remember, the profits of the Congress are used by ARFORA to give scholarships and finance the regular and special projects.

The annual Congress is the main fundraising event for ARFORA.

The parish priest is a member of the Congress Planning Committee. He is in charge of coordinating the religious services during the Congress. He also opens and closes the meeting with a prayer. It is his responsibility to arrange a time for hearing Confessions during the Congress weekend.

The entire Financial Statements must be sent to the ARFORA Treasurer within 60 days of the completion of the Congress.

The profit made at the Congress helps ARFORA fulfill its purposes in the year following the Congress.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

These committees should be set up as soon as your bid to host the congress has been accepted.

Accommodations Committee

This committee is responsible for reserving hotel accommodations for the Archbishop, the Bishop, the ARFORA President and the Spiritual Advisor. These rooms are paid for by the Host Committee. A block of about 20 rooms should also be reserved in advance for the delegates.

Church meeting rooms need to be reserved in advance. If meetings are to be held in the hotel because the church facilities are not adequate, these rooms must also be reserved.

AD BOOK (or SOUVENIR BOOK) COMMITTEE

This committee is responsible for soliciting advertising both locally and nationally. Plan to obtain advertising for the Ad-book.

Include in the **AD BOOK**:

- a. a photograph of the Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and his message
- b. a photograph of the Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and his message
- c. a photograph of the ARFORA president and her message
- d. a photograph of the ARFORA's Spiritual Advisor and his message
- e. ARFORA scholarship recipients in that year
- f. a photograph and letter of welcome from city official (optional)
- g. the Schedule of Events
- h. local businesses sponsors
- i. Dates of importance of auxiliaries in English and Romanian

The AD BOOK Committee is also responsible for printing the AD BOOK which includes all the paid ads and the information provided by the President of ARFORA and the ARFORA Board.

A few people on this committee should solicit ads. This Committee should have a Secretary whose duty it will be to write letters to facilitate the work of the AD BOOK Chairperson. (ARFORA letterhead should be used). This project can generate a very good profit for the congress. The AD BOOK receipts are to be used only to pay for the AD BOOK; the AD BOOK net profit is used to contribute to the profit of the Congress.

After the Congress is over, a copy of the AD BOOK must be given or sent to each advertiser who purchased one page or a half of page. Also, copies are given to each attendee of the Congress.

CONGRESS COMMITTEE

This committee is responsible for sending out the **Congress Delegation Deposit Forms** and keeping a Deposit Record of the number of delegates planning to attend the Congress. These deposits are payable to the Host Account for the Congress. (Ex. 70th ARFORA Congress).

The Congress Committee should ensure that every ladies auxiliary has received Congress Delegation Deposit Forms. The mailing should be sent to all active as well as inactive auxiliaries. ****NOTE:** Inactive ladies auxiliaries may become active by paying their membership dues at the Congress.

A complete list of the officers and delegates of all local ladies auxiliaries is available from the ARFORA Secretary.

****NOTE: If the ladies auxiliary president cannot attend the Congress, she may be represented only by the vice-president. If preoteasa cannot attend the Congress, no one can represent her. If a delegate cannot attend, she may be represented by the alternate delegate. If the alternate cannot attend, she may be represented by another member of the auxiliary only if she comes with a letter of authority from the ladies auxiliary general assembly.**

In April, follow-up letters must be sent to those ladies auxiliaries who have not yet sent in their Congress Delegation Deposit Forms.

On the last week of April, send a copy of the Congress Delegation Deposit Form to the ARFORA Secretary and President, so that Roll Call Sheets may be prepared for the Congress.

Speakers and Entertaining Committee

A guest speaker for the Congress may be arranged for, in consultation with the ARFORA President. When this speaker is from the area or is already attending the event as a participant, we usually give a \$100 honorarium from the Congress proceeds.

If a local speaker was not successfully found, a speaker from outside the area may be invited. To this outside of the area Congress speaker who is not attending the event as a participant, the travel and accommodations expenses should be reimbursed.

Registration Fee Committee

The Congress Registration Fee is set by the host Registration Fee Committee, in consultation with the ARFORA Board. This fee will be collected when the delegates register at the Congress. The full registration fee for the congress must be sent by the delegates, in advance, to the Congress Treasurer. If it was not sent in advance, it must be paid on arrival at the Congress site.

Before a Registration Fee can be set, the Registration Fee Committee must get accurate estimates of all the costs involved in running the Congress. Remember to inflate the prices by the current inflation rate. The registration fee should not be less than \$75 to be profitable. Usually, fee is \$125 per delegate, but it's up to the committee to decide.

Registration Committee

It is customary to prepare small gift bags for the delegates attending the ARFORA congress.

Typically, about fifty bags should be sufficient, but the committee can make a better judgement after the Congress Delegation Deposit Forms are received.

Registration gift bags should include favors such as note pads, pencils, individual Kleenex packets, small handcrafts, or whatever is obtainable locally **free of charge**. Also, included in the Registration kit should be:

- Host auxiliary letter of welcome
- Agenda of the Annual meeting (if available)
- A Congress AD BOOK
- A city map of the map of immediate area
- Information about local businesses, coupons
- Information about local activities, tours, etc.

Once the Congress Registration Fee has been determined and the Registration Information has been distributed, **name tags** may be prepared, in advance of the Congress, for delegates who have sent in all the information required, including their checks for the complete registration fee. The name tags should be distributed at the

registration desk with a gift bag.

The Registration Fee Committee will receive from the ARFORA Secretary, a list of the names and contact information of the auxiliary president, the preoteasa, the delegates, and the alternates of each member auxiliary of ARFORA, usually by February 15.

A Registration table should be set up at the entrance of the Congress Reception area.

Registration kits are provided gratis to the following people:

- a. Archbishop
- b. Bishop
- c. Spiritual Advisor and his Preoteasa
- d. ARFORA President

Guests must purchase tickets for all meals and entertaining events they wish to attend.

Guests **DO NOT** RECEIVE Registration kits.

Photograph and Publicity Committee

This is a very important committee. The Congress must be adequately advertised locally and nationally to encourage attendance. A Convocation is sent to Solia, the Herald, by the ARFORA ~~Secretary~~ President.

Provide your local newspaper with information about the Congress, which they could publish to create local interest in the Congress. Advertise the Congress in the host Church Bulletin, as well as in the bulletins of the neighboring parishes. Also, you can advertise on Facebook or on the church website. Make sure you advertise the events which the public can attend, such as banquets, dances, and entertainment.

Photographs should be taken during the Congress of all the activities. Copies of candid shots should be given to ARFORA president. If it's an election year, a photographer must be present to take pictures of the newly elected board, as well as the delegates.

A copy of each of these two photographs must be sent to the ARFORA President.

At the conclusion of the Congress, the President should send an article to the Solia, reporting on the Congress and include the photographs.

Meals Committee

If meals are prepared and served by the host auxiliary, there should be a committee delegated to look after these tasks. It is preferable to serve meals in a room separate from the meeting room. In some cases, where space is at a premium, it may be necessary to have extra people on hand for the purpose of cleaning the area quickly, so the meeting may continue without delay.

Decoration Committee

This committee is responsible for providing a pleasing atmosphere in the meeting hall, as well as in all locations where food and entertainment are provided.

Table floral arrangements are at the discretion of the committee. At the conclusion of the Congress, they could be given away in a draw or be sent to the convalescents in the area or church.

Hospitality and Transportation Committee

This committee is on duty during the entire weekend of the Congress. These people may be identified by wearing host badges and ribbons.

Arrangements should be made to meet delegates on their arrival, when delegates made prior arrangements with the host auxiliary as to their method of transportation, as well as arrival and departure time, if necessary.

Registration may start the first night (Friday) at the church. A few finger foods should be provided.

The host auxiliary should arrange for transportation for the Archbishop, Bishop and ARFORA President, to and from all events, if necessary,

Complimentary Tickets Committee

Only one person should be responsible for the Complimentary tickets issued. These tickets should be plainly marked "COMPLIMENTARY". They are provided to the Archbishop, Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and his preteasa and to the ARFORA President. Complimentary tickets are also provided to the guest speaker and all nuns in attendance.

Tickets Committee

Delegates are admitted to all events by wearing the name tags received at registration. Inform the delegates that the name tags must be worn at all times.

Two of the committee members seated at the registration table should be responsible for selling meal tickets to guests who are accompanying the delegates. The prices for meals must be set in advance, The ticket should show the function (breakfast, lunch, dinner), the time, and price. The format of the ticket is up to the discretion of the committee. They need not be professionally printed.

Banquet Committee

Reserve tables for the ARFORA Board and the delegates. Also, reserve table for the clergy in attendance. Place Ad-books on the tables and envelopes for special donations to the ARFORA Congress. This is customary procedure for all national auxiliary banquets.

Congress Net Profit

The financial statements and the net profit must be sent to the ARFORA Treasurer within 60 days of the completion of the Congress. A 10% rebate will be returned to the host auxiliary.

Church Service on Sunday

Reserve the first two rows on the right side of the Church for the ARFORA Board and the next four rows for the delegates.

****FOR LETTER SAMPLES AND INFORMATION OF PREVIOUS CONGRESSES, PLEASE REFER TO THE BINDER(S) PREPARED BY THE PREVIOUS HOST AUXILIARY.**

INFORMATION ON THE PROCEDURES FOR THE CONGRESS YOU HOSTED SHOULD BE TYPED AND INSERTED IN A BINDER AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONGRESS. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE MINUTES OF ALL MEETINGS AND WORK DONE BY ALL COMMITTEES, INCLUDING THE BUDGET AND THE TREASURER'S REPORTS.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINES

1. Arrange for a main speaker in consultation with ARFORA President. Preferably a woman speaker (e.g. Somebody from the two nuns' monastery); Finalize the main speaker and inform the ARFORA President.
2. Book the church hall for all activities for the ARFORA Congress.
3. Arrange and confirm hotel accommodations.
4. Send the invitation to the Diocesan Archbishop and Bishop, requesting the honor of his presence at the Congress and stating the arrangements will be made on their behalf.
5. Send letters with ad contracts and requests for patrons (\$20) and boosters (\$10):
 - to the presidents of the Ladies Auxiliaries and to all parishes
 - to the parishioners of your parish, asking for their support of the Congress and the Souvenir book.
 - To all businesses with which your parish and parish members do business.
6. The ARFORA Secretary will send an updated listing of the presidents, delegates and alternates of the ladies auxiliaries to the Hosting Ladies Auxiliary
7. The Congress Secretary will send letters to ladies auxiliaries presidents along with the Congress Delegation Deposit Forms requesting delegate information and payment deposit.
8. Send letters of invitation to attend the Congress to the Very Rev, Mothers of the two Orthodox Monasteries (Transfiguration and Dormition of the Mother of God).
9. ARFORA president will send a Schedule of Events and hotel information, in English and Romanian, to Solia Editor for publication.
10. Send follow-up letters to ladies auxiliary presidents who have not returned their Congress Delegation Deposit forms, requesting to return the form and their checks,
11. Finalize entertainment events (contracts?)
12. Send Invitation letters:
 - a. To all chapter presidents and delegates, along with a Schedule of Events and hotel information. Ask them to indicate if they need to be picked up at the airport.
 - b. To all clergy of the host Deanery together with a Schedule of Events and hotel information.
 - c. To all parishes, including Schedule of Events. They should be asked to include this information in their church bulletins.
13. Send "Thank you" letters to appropriate people and businesses and the AD BOOK.
14. Send Financial Reports of the Congress along with a check for the net proceeds, to ARFORA Treasurer within 60 days of the completion of the Congress.

Remember to keep in touch with ARFORA president, when necessary. She must be informed of the progress of the Congress Planning Committee.

This Manual was updated today 06 June 2026, during the 78th ARFORA Congress, Hollywood, FL.