

## **MidWest SAS User Group, Inc. - FAQ session**

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### **Abstract**

This will be a moderated panel discussion on MWSUG activities. The main purposes are to (1) disseminate information to users in the area, (2) develop interest and volunteers, and (3) obtain feedback from users. Some of the topics for discussion are: MWSUG board membership, MWSUG conference selection, and conference planning. MWSUG is an incorporated entity with a 10 person board of directors. Several board members will be on the panel to answer questions from the audience. The Board is in the process of formalizing some guidelines for the topics listed above.

**Keywords:** MWSUG, site selection, co-chair, Board of Directors

### **Introduction**

The timeliness of the information contained in this document varies with the content area. Most of the information on site selection, board membership, and conference co-chair selection are still working guidelines. A more up to date status will be available at the FAQ session because there will be a Board meeting immediately prior to the conference. Any member in the MidWest region should feel free to contribute suggestions and comments to any board member as we try to shape the future and organization of MWSUG, Inc.

### **Our Mission Statement**

The mission of the MidWest SAS Users Group is to provide users with many opportunities and enhanced resources for SAS products, as well as to facilitate

communications to and from SAS Institute, Inc., and users of SAS in the MidWest region.

### **History of MWSUG**

Once upon a time, sometime around SUGI 14, a small group of SAS users gathered to discuss the formation of the second regional SAS users group which was to represent SAS users in the mid-western area. After careful planning, a letter of introduction was sent to other SAS user groups within a vast area asking for support for this regional idea. Support came rolling in and the MidWest SAS Users Group was born.

The MidWest SAS Users Group (MWSUG) was chartered in December of 1989 by the SUGI Executive Board as the second regional SAS users group. MWSUG represents and serves local, in-house, and special interest groups in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The major activity of MWSUG was to hold an annual conference.

### **Conferences**

|      |                  |
|------|------------------|
| 1990 | Minneapolis, MN  |
| 1991 | Chicago, IL      |
| 1992 | Kansas City, MO  |
| 1993 | Indianapolis, IN |
| 1994 | Omaha, NE        |
| 1995 | Cleveland, OH    |
| 1996 | Minneapolis, MN  |
| 1997 | Chicago, IL      |
| 1998 | TBD              |
| 1999 | Columbus, OH     |

### **Incorporation**

On January 26, 1995, MidWest SAS Users Group was formally organized under the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act. MWSUG was the first regional to incorporate. The decision to incorporate was made largely due to tax and liability considerations.

### **SAS Institute, SUGI and MWSUG**

SUGI is the international organization of SAS Users. MWSUG is the MidWest regional SAS Users group. SUGI issues the regional charters, including MWSUG. SUGI appoints a liaison to each regional. For MWSUG, this individual is a ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.

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While SUGI and SAS Institute are distinct and separate entities, many of the administrative details associated with the SUGI Conference are handled directly by SAS Institute. All the details of the MWSUG conference are handled by volunteers of the MWSUG organization. This is the same with all other regional and special interest conferences.

SAS Institute is very instrumental in the success of the MWSUG Conference. SAS Institute supplies several speakers, a demonstration area with support staff, announcement and registration packet mailings, and publication of the conference proceedings. Hotel choice, costs, speakers, organization, proceedings editing, registration, audiovisual, and conference conduct

are all handled by the conference committee.

MWSUG is financially liable for all aspects of the conference. It is with this consideration that MWSUG chose to incorporate.

### **Conference Site Selection**

Currently, the major activity of MWSUG is to hold an annual conference. Site selection has been based on several factors: local user group support, hotel facilities and hotel costs. The conference location has tried to alternate between cities on opposite sides of the region to allow all users to attend a conference in a driveable distance every other or third year.

As the organization continues to develop, we are examining a site selection policy. There has been more interest shown the last two years than ever before. In the early conference years, there was rarely more than one city submitting a proposal for a given year. With more cities wanting to host a conference, we are establishing site selection criteria.

Some ideas / discussion points under consideration are:

- Rotate the conference through four major areas - Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Ohio. The conference itself would not have to be held exactly in these states every four years. For example, St. Louis, Kansas City or Omaha might be considered for Missouri, and Cleveland, Columbus, or Cincinnati might be chosen for Ohio.
- Separate the co-chair selection from the site selection, similar to SUGI. This would allow us to seek out competitive bids between hotels and cities and arrive at the best situation for conference attendees.

- Ensure local user group support in whatever city chosen.
- Avoid the appearance that user groups themselves are competing - rather have hotels competing.
- Conferences should be somewhat profitable. However, as we make decisions about future sites, it may be possible to hold a smaller conference in a smaller locale to be accessible to users that may not otherwise attend.
- Up until this time, site selection and hotel negotiation has been done by conference co-chairs in conjunction with the conference co-chairs. Usually this is the area where board members and co-chairs have little expertise. We are trying a site selection company this year to seek a hotel contract for the 1998 conference. This company does not cost us anything and makes its money from a "finders fee" paid by the hotel. They show promise in getting better hotel deals, freeing up co-chair time to concentrate on the program, and allowing the conference to be more cost effective. More details on how well it works to come.

User groups wishing to be considered for future selection should contact one of the Directors.

#### **Selection of Conference Co-Chairs**

Conference co-chairs have usually been chosen by the locale submitting the site proposal. Usually there have been two co-chairs which split duties along administrative and program lines. It is nice to have one co-chair in the hosting city to handle administrative duties and act as a hotel liaison.

As we decide on a site selection policy, the selection on conference co-chairs

may change. Conference co-chairs will be approved by the Board of Directors.

The workload, as a voluntary position, is tremendous. It will put a strain on your work, your family, and your spare time. As a past co-chair, I can tell you that Allan (the other co-chair) and I met at the YMCA while his children were swimming, at the Euclid mall which was a central location, at my office, and a half a dozen other odd locales. We were on the phone constantly to each other and to other conference committee members, SAS Institute, the hotel, and speakers and volunteers. Even his children could identify my voice when I called.

While it helps to have a good conference committee, there is still a lot of work that starts almost a year prior to the conference and continues for at least a month post conference. Even if the Board of Directors removes the headaches of hotel negotiation, there is still lots of work. On the plus side, there are the rewards of hosting a successful conference, meeting many new people, learning a lot about SAS, and seeing the inside of hosting a conference.

Some of the activities conference co-chairs are currently responsible for are establishing and maintaining a budget, soliciting presentations, editing and collating the conference proceedings, the entire registration process, special events, coordination of outside training activities, audiovisual equipment, opening and closing sessions, and preparing a final conference report for the Board.

Potential conference co-chairs should consider volunteering in different capacities at MWSUG Conferences and SUGI. Volunteers are always needed for Section chairs and session

coordinators (program side) and registration and facilities (administrative side). If I haven't scared you off, and you are still interested in volunteering or learning more about conference chair responsibilities, contact any board member.

#### **Election of Board Members**

There are 10 board members. Board members are elected by the Board of Directors for a 5 year term. Each year, two board member terms expire and two board members are elected.

Candidates for the board should submit their name for consideration to a current board member. Currently there are no guidelines for board membership. Following are some points for consideration in deriving guidelines:

- Should attend the annual MWSUG conference.
- Should be active in the MWSUG organization as a conference co-chair, conference committee member, conference volunteer, conference speaker. Participation in SUGI activities and local activities will also be considered.
- Should be willing to serve to serve a complete 5 year term.
- Regional representation and make-up of the entire board. That is, it is desirable to have members representing the various areas of the MidWest region. Whether this representation should be based on geographic boundaries or per capita is unclear.
- By bylaws, board membership cannot exceed 10 years.

#### **Other topics**

Other issues that have been brought up for discussion at various times include:

- a regional newsletter to keep users in touch with what MWSUG is doing.

- a speakers bureau to provide national / regional speakers to local users groups at minimal cost to the users group.
- training programs or other miniature conferences
- accepting advertising by trainers and consultants in conference programs and as Web links.

#### **MWSUG Communications**

Web Page: MWSUG does have a Web site. It is located at <http://www.biostat.wustl.edu/mwsug/mwsug.htm> which can also be reached through the SAS Institute Web site.

MWSUG-L: This is a listserv for electronic mail where you can post messages to other SAS users in the MidWest area. You must subscribe before posting a message but anyone can subscribe. Conference updates and other information of interest to all MWSUG members will be posted here. To subscribe just send an e-mail message to [LISTSERV@CMSUVMC.CMSU.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@CMSUVMC.CMSU.EDU). The subject line can be blank but the message must contain the following with your name:  
**SUBSCRIBE MWSUG-L John Doe**  
You should receive a confirmation back. Nancy Hill voluntarily maintains this service.

#### **Statements**

I asked current board members to answer one of three questions for this paper. Due to the short time constraints only two are available. Others will be available at the FAQ, and hopefully on the MWSUG web page. We are considering asking potential co-chairs and board members to provide a similar statement upon submitting their name as a candidate.

- What do you hope to accomplish as a MWSUG Board member?
- What is the biggest challenge facing MWSUG, Inc.?
- What do you think is the major responsibility of a MWSUG Board member?

*What do you hope to accomplish as a MWSUG Board member?*

**LMQ:** There are several things I would like to accomplish as a board member. I would like to have the Board automate and document some of the major activities of the organization (site selection, conference planning, board member selection), develop interested and willing volunteers to chair future conferences and/or become board members, and to refine the organization's business performance. I think if we can accomplish automation and documentation of major functions we can start to see savings in both dollars and manpower. As we continue to disseminate information to the membership, we can develop the potential conference co-chairs and board members. With these accomplished, we can start to act as true business entity and continue/improve the fine successes the organization has already seen.

*What do you hope to accomplish as a MWSUG Board member?*

**AMK:** I would like to assist the Board in developing a set of operating procedures that will guide the Board in its normal activities and that will help MWSUG evolve as an organization. MWSUG was the first regional users group to incorporate. As we have progressed over the past few years since our incorporation, we have sometimes found ourselves in situations for which there was no established policy. Part of organizations evolution is learning from these situations. The

knowledge gained in this process has to be passed on to future board members. This can only be done through documented operating procedures or business practices. With established business practices, business can go on as usual without the necessity of postponing decisions until the next board meeting or attempting to poll all of the board members for activities that are just a normal part of doing business.

### Conclusion

The Board of Directors is always interested in what MWSUG can do to better serve the users in this region. The only formal method we have on collecting this information is on the conference evaluation forms. However, we would welcome comments and suggestions from anyone at anytime.

### Current Board of Directors (1997)

|                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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