Brief to Host a Future
Groningen Declaration Network Annual Meeting

Introduction

The Groningen Declaration Network seeks to promote the academic, professional, and global mobility needs of citizens by bringing together key stakeholders in the Digital Learner Data Ecosystem through its activities, especially its Annual Meeting.

GDN Mission: Aiming to deliver on digital learner data portability. The GDN brings together key stakeholders through a declaration of intent. Signatories cooperate on a voluntary basis, seeking not standardization but rather convergence. The main goal includes developing best practices and globally accepted standards for secure, citizen-centered consultation and portability of digital learner data.

GDN Vision: Towards a trusted digital learner data ecosystem. In 2024, the Network constitutes a global, broad, and interconnected ecosystem including large digital learner data depositories, educational institutions, government bodies, and other stakeholders. Participants in this ecosystem work together to guarantee trust by encouraging safe administration, processing, consultation, exchange, acceptance, and recognition of digital learner data, in addition to appropriately verified paper-based records, using the best standards and technology available.

GDN Ethical Principles: learner centered at its core. Committed to learner privacy and data protection; transparency; responsible practices; interoperability; openness; learner and institutional freedom to choose delivery options; integrity; diversity; respect for the law; auditability; good fellowship; and access.

Strategic GDN Objectives: Focused on best practice. To share best practices in digitally secure systems and to coordinate policies on the purpose, feasibility, and cost-efficiency of worldwide exchange of digital learner data; system compatibility; comparability and interoperability; digitized assessment practices; and adherence to national or federal privacy rights.

Objectives

The GDN has held an annual meeting since its inception in 2012. In person meetings have been held in Groningen (The Netherlands), Beijing (China), Washington (United States), Málaga (Spain), Cape Town (South Africa), Melbourne (Australia), Paris (France), and Puebla (Mexico). Due to COVID-19, the 2020 in person annual meeting (which was to be held in Delhi, India) had to be canceled and was provided later in the year as a virtual conference. In 2021, the annual meeting was held as a hybrid event, blending a virtual conference with an in-person event in beautiful Ottawa, Canada. In 2022 the Annual Meeting returned to Groningen where it all began. In 2023 the first Annual Meeting in the middle-east was held in Amman, Jordan.

The objectives of the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) Annual Meeting are:

1

- To further the mission and vision of the GDN.
- To raise revenue to sustain the operations of the GDN.
- To provide a forum to share best practice, new ideas and networking opportunities.

Delegates/Attendees

The delegate or attendee base is composed of signatories to the Groningen Declaration including founder and patron entities, sponsors, and other stakeholders. It is a goal to grow delegate registrations year on year and specifically to increase registrations by a minimum of 10% each year. This may be achieved by spreading word about the network beyond educational institutions to the information technology sector, employer associations, evaluation and recognition agencies, quality assurance bodies, immigration authorities - in short, to all who have a stake in the Digital Learner Data Ecosystem.

Theme

The GDN Board explores possible themes as well as venues for each annual meeting and presents viable options to the Annual Meeting Organizing Committee (AMOC) and GDN Executive Director. The theme should be decided by the AMOC, and appropriate artwork and branding should be created by the end of August in the year prior to the host year. This allows for promotion at the current year Annual Meeting.

The location, dates and selected venue should be decided by the GDN Executive Director after seeking final approval from the AMOC.

Examples of logos and artwork from recent past years.

Location

The geographical location of the venue should have:

- Easy access in terms of delegates traveling internationally, including air travel connectivity as well as accessible transit options between the main airport, accommodations, and the conference venue.
- Tourism appeal to assist in attracting delegates from around the world.

Dates

Starting in 2021, the GDN Annual Meeting are held around mid-October to early November each year. When setting dates, important factors to consider are:

- Hosting the Annual Meeting at a similar time as previous years, to adhere to an annual cycle;
- What competing events happening worldwide may impact attendance to the GDN Annual Meeting; and
- Venue availability for the proposed dates, to ensure that the conference and accommodation facilities are as suitable as possible.

Detailed Venue & Accommodation Criteria

Purpose of Criteria

- To provide potential local hosts with a clear indication of the expectations associated with hosting the GDN Annual Meeting (AM).
- To provide the Board with a rubric with which to assess local host bids.

Criteria

The criteria have been split into Essential and Desirable.

- Essential, as the name suggests, must be met; these include specific venue, accommodation, and catering requirements for the proper functioning of the AM.
- Desirable, which may be utilized to differentiate between options where two bids are close.

Essential Criteria

- If the local host is a university or educational institution, then the institution must be a GDN signatory or Patron (or willing to become a signatory/patron prior to finalization of the assessment process);
- Demonstrate how the host city is easily accessible in terms of international transport as well as accessibility to the venue and/or urban core from the transport hub;
- Demonstrate ability and commitment to assist in facilitating all aspects of the Annual Meeting, including AV – both in venue, and a contribution to its hybrid functioning;
- Evidence of ability to meet all or most of the 'Venue Requirements' listed below:
  - A university or educational institution with good meeting/event facilities is preferred, however, if this is not practical or possible, then a good quality residential hotel;

3

- Plenary room for capacity up to 200-250 with staging, lighting, and audio-visual setups;
  - Smaller rooms for concurrent sessions – up to 4 sessions running concurrently;
  - Breakout space for refreshment breaks;
  - Breakout space for sponsor displays/exhibition – up to 15 sponsors or exhibitors; and
  - Additional meeting rooms for Board meetings, sponsor breakfasts, and ancillary meetings with capacity up to 20;
- Evidence of ability of the venue, or of other facilities in the immediate area, to meet all or most of the Catering Requirements below:
  - Arrival tea and coffee, and other refreshment breaks on all conference days;
  - Lunches on all conference days; and
  - Catering, as needed, for other events in the annual meeting agenda, including: Opening reception, special breakfasts, annual dinner, board dinners;
- Evidence of ability of the venue, or of other facilities in the immediate area, to meet the Accommodation Requirements below:
  - Two accommodation options: one 4 or 5-star residential hotel and one alternate cost-effective option;
  - The ability of conference guests to reserve their own accommodations via an online portal;
  - Block bookings of approx. 20 rooms for Board Directors, Keynote speakers, and staff;
  - Other accommodation blocks for conference attendees; and
  - Reliable and suitable transportation between the conference venue and the accommodations if needed;
- Evidence of support from the local host organization (for example, submission co-signed by president, CEO or equivalent);
- Proposal on how the local host will encourage regional stakeholders to participate in the AM;
- Provision of staff for the AM including guides and support staff, but also AV support/operators;
- Provide a nominated 'project manager' or liaison (with authority to act) to work with the GDN Executive Director; and
- Provide a safety and risk assessment but with a focus on inclusivity not exclusivity.

Desirable Criteria

- Proposal for local cultural event to promote linkages to the local community and culture;
- Provide meeting space for board meetings both prior and post the AM.

Venue Assessment Rubric

The Venue Assessment Rubric integrates all the essential and desirable criteria, as well as the detailed accommodation and catering requirements for any local host venue. It can be found at the end of this document.

Other Venue, Accommodation, and Catering Protocols

- Preferred lead time is 18 months / 2 years in advance so a meeting between the local hosts and the Board/AMOC can be scheduled for the preceding year (e.g. Oslo is 2025, meeting with Board/AMOC is June 2024).
- Contract negotiations should seek the best 'conference room rates' available, preferably with breakfast and free WiFi included.
- Accommodation blocks for delegate rooms should be reserved with attention to release conditions such as 90, 60, and 30 days to minimize GDN liability for unused rooms.
- The logistics of organizing accommodations will vary based on the venue format selected:
  - Should a university or other educational institution host, then accommodations will likely need to be booked off-site. Depending on public transit availability and proximity, additional transportation costs may arise.
  - Should a hotel serve as the venue site, then all venue logistics, accommodations, and catering may be centrally procured.

Marketing

- Marketing the GDN Annual Meeting is the responsibility of all stakeholders, however a coordinated approach is required. The GDN Executive Director will have ultimate responsibility for marketing the event.

Program Design

The GDN Annual Meeting program design will be the responsibility of the Annual Meeting Organizing Committee and the Board, however, innovative meeting design ideas are encouraged. In 2021, the annual meeting was a hybrid or blended event and Cvent cloud-based conference management software was used to deliver virtual presentations and to live stream live presentations.

The typical GDN Annual Meeting is organized as follows:

- Day 1 - Plenary sessions, panels, concurrent sessions and opening reception
- Day 2 - Plenary sessions, panels, concurrent sessions and Annual Dinner
- Day 3 - Plenary sessions, panels, concurrent sessions and closing session
- Pre and /or post cultural tours are expected and are the responsibility of the local host.
- Concurrent sessions derive from submissions to a call for papers

Keynote Speaker Selection

Six (6) keynote speakers will be selected by the board according to research by the Executive Director and in collaboration with the local host. Previously, several panel discussions proved a popular way to bring together topic experts from around the globe with panelists being present at the venue and 'zooming' in.

Travel and accommodation costs for the keynote speakers are paid by GDN in lieu of fees or honoraria.

Call for Proposals

GDN will issue a 'Call for Proposals' according to the theme and current topics of interest. A program committee will review the submissions with the final approval to be presented by the Board.

The 'Call for Proposals' should be promoted at least 8 months in advance to allow time for the submission process, the review process, notification of success or otherwise and the final scheduling of the presentations into the meeting agenda.

Social Functions

Several social functions are held during the GDN Annual Meeting to facilitate networking and foster collaborative, personal and professional relationships.

Social functions ideally incorporate cultural experiences so that delegates enjoy the culture of the host city or country. Typically, venues seek to involve local organizations that may have an interest in contributing to the programming of the social event.

Sponsorship

The GDN has developed sponsorship packages which are regularly reviewed to attract sponsorship for the annual meeting. The GDN Annual Meeting Organizing Committee has a dedicated sponsorship coordinator who will work with the Board, the Executive Director and the local host organizer to secure sponsorship and ensure their expectations are exceeded.

Ancillary Services

Transportation services

Transportation for delegates to and from off-site venues, for example a dinner venue or any cultural experience should be contracted and managed by the local host.

Airport transfers for Board Directors and Keynote Speakers are appreciated and should be managed by the local host.

Audio Visual and Technical Services

Audio visual and technical services are an important part of the success of the annual meeting. A reputable specialist or specialist staff should be contracted and managed by the local host. Given the complexities of delivering hybrid or blended events, a highly experienced audio-visual team will need to be contracted to ensure a seamless live and virtual delegate experience.

The local host and the organizing committee will work with the venue and AV suppliers to ensure staging and lighting are of a high standard.

Gifts and Giveaways (Optional)

The local host may give gifts or giveaways to enhance delegate experience of the host city, venue, or location. Costs of these gifts or giveaways are the responsibility of the local host.

Insurances

GDN has public liability insurance, however the local host should also ensure they have an appropriate level of public liability insurance**.** Event insurance is increasingly difficult to secure, and the Board will advise on appetites for risk according to the current and projected circumstances.

Medical Services

Local hosts of the GDN should ensure that quality medical services are available should delegates require medical attention during the annual meeting**.** Covid safe practices should be adhered to at all times.

Signage

Signage and appropriate acknowledgement of sponsors are the responsibility of the local host. The organizing committee and sponsorship coordinator will work with the local host to provide logos as sponsors are confirmed.

Visas

Visa issuance is typically the responsibility of the consular (diplomatic) services of the country where an annual meeting is held. The local host will therefore be the primary point of contact for delegates who need assistance in their visa application, first and foremost by providing invitation letters and general information to support visa applications. Sample support letters are available from the Annual Meeting Organizing Committee.

Visitor Information

The local host should provide visitor information for inclusion on the Annual Meeting website and make any arrangements for support from tourist organizations in providing a valuable experience for delegates and their partners.

Professional Conference Management Services

The GDN has contracted Duklas Cornerstone Consulting Inc. (DCC) to provide professional conference management services. DCC has begun providing this service as of 2024.

DCC undertakes to action the following:

- Establish and maintain dedicated website or micro web pages for GDN Annual Meetings**;**
- Ensure the various databases (GDN Participants and GDN Annual Meeting attendees) are consolidated and managed appropriately;
- Work with designers and incorporate conference logo designs into all digital communications; and
- Create presentation templates as required using conference logo designs**.**

Registration

- Establish an online registration system to manage registrations and receipt of payments;

- Respond to registration enquiries and manage delegate information;
- Maintain accurate lists (databases) for efficient use in all aspects of conference management – attendee lists, social functions, dietary requirements etc.; and
- Prepare and disseminate regular reports to the organizing committee as requested.

Onsite

- Prepare name badges or arrange for the preparation of name badges
- Provide onsite annual meeting support and event coordination
- Work with the local host organisers and or venues to facilitate smooth operations
- Assist on the registration desk and answer queries as required

Payment

- Issue invoices where requested for registrations and sponsorships as required
- Reconcile all accounts and provide financial reports as requested

Speaker Arrangements

- Create speaker lists in database with biographies, photos, contact details, presentation abstracts
- Work with identified speakers to collect their bios and photos, collate and make available for use in digital promotion and or program production.
- Collect and prepare speaker presentation files (PowerPoint) including the production of conference home slides for a smooth and consistent delivery of the program.

Conference Session Submission Proposals

- Set up a cloud-based proposal submission portal to receive presentation submissions by way of web form (or Google Docs as directed).
- Maintain the submission database ready for review by the program committee
- Distribute or arrange online access to speaker proposals for Conference Organizing Committee
- Liaise with the Conference Organizing Committee regarding submission open and closed dates etc.

Conference Sponsorship

- Issue sponsorship invoices and agreements as required

Financial arrangements

GDN will make deposit payments and payments to suppliers for services associated with the GDN Annual Meeting which are executed by the Executive Director. These can be paid by GDN Corporate credit card or by electronic funds transfer.

Quotes through the Executive Director should be requested as soon as possible for local suppliers for items such as:

- Catering for delegate meals;

- Transportation services;
- Audio Visual services and staging requirements;
- Entertainment;
- Social functions;
- Delegate merchandise (bags, name badges, etc); and
- Photographic services.

Local hosts should be prepared to cover a portion of the costs which will be acknowledged as sponsorship.

Key Responsibilities at a Glance

Component	Responsibility	Timeline
Theme	GDN Exec. Dir.in consult with host and GDN AMOC	31 August - for Oct-Nov next year
Location and venue	GDN Exec. Dir.in consult with host and GDN AMOC	31 August - for Oct-Nov next year
Dates	GDN Exec. Dir.in consult with host and GDN AMOC	31 August - for Oct-Nov next year
Artwork and Branding	GDN Exec. Dir.	Dec Jan - for Oct-Nov next year
Ancillary Services	Local Host	As appropriate
Visitor information & activities	Local Host in consult with GDN executive director	Dec Jan in advance of the year held
Call for Presentations	GDN Board and GDN AMOC	Jan of the year held or before
Website	GDN Exec. Dir and team	Jan of the year held or before
Registration	GDN Exec. Dir and team	30 April of the year held or before

Typical Task List

The following presents typical tasks and preferred time frames.

Key Tasks	Responsibility	Months prior to Annual Meeting														
		15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Administrative																
Set dates for annual meeting	Ed, Local Organizing Committee & Local Host	▓				░										
Location and Venue																
Start liaison with local organizing contact	GDN Exec & DCC	▓														
Confirm venue information	Ed and Local Organizing Committee		▓													
Confirm accommodation options for delegates	Ed and Local Organizing Committee							▓	▓	▓						
Program																
Decide theme of Annual Meeting	AMOC, Ed		▓													
Develop Call for Papers text	Ed				▓											
Keynote speaker invitations	Ed			░	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓				
Open Paper Submissions	Ed				░					▓						
Close paper submissions	Ed							░				▓				
Review submissions	Ed, AMOC								░			▓	▓			
Release first draft program	Ed										░		▓			
Release final program	Ed											▓				

Marketing and Promotion

Task	Owner
Create art for Annual Meeting banner for promotions	Ed
Write copy for website on Annual Meeting	Ed
Create and populate AM info on website	Ed
Marketing emails	Ed

Delegate Registration

Task	Owner
Confirm registration fee structure	GDN Exec, Ed
Set up registration site	Ed team
Open Registrations	Ed team
Close Registrations	Ed team

Venue Assessment Rubric

After the RFP process, each candidate venue should be judged based on this assessment template, with weightings adjusted based on the planned events of that particular annual meeting agenda.

Criteria	Weighting	Met?
Essential	1=low 3=med 5=high	
1. Be a GDN signatory or Patron (or willing to become a signatory/patron prior to finalisation of assessment process).		
2. Demonstrate how the host city is easily accessible in terms of location and transport.		
3. Demonstrate ability to cover cost of venue including AV – both in venue, and a contribution to hybrid.		
4. Committed to meet all or most of the Venue Requirements below:		
• A university or educational institution with good meeting/event facilities is preferred, however, if this is not practical or possible, then a good quality residential hotel.		
• Plenary room for capacity up to 200-250 with staging, lighting, and audio visual		
• Smaller rooms for concurrent sessions – up to 4 sessions running concurrently		
• Breakout space for refreshment breaks		
5. Commitment to ensure that the venue, or of other facilities in the immediate area, meet all or most of the Catering Requirements below:		
• Arrival tea and coffee, and other refreshment breaks on all conference days		
• Lunches on all conference days		
• Catering, as needed, for other events in the annual meeting agenda, including: Opening reception, special breakfasts, annual dinner, board dinners.		
6. Commitment to ensure the venue, or of other facilities in the immediate area, meet the Accommodation Requirements below:		
• Two accommodation options: one 4 or 5-star residential hotel and one alternate cost-effective option.		
• The ability of conference guests to reserve their own accommodations via an online portal.		
• Block bookings of approx. 20 rooms for Board Directors, Keynote speakers, and staff.		
• Other accommodation blocks for conference attendees.		

• Reliable and suitable transportation between the conference venue and the accommodations if needed.		
7. Evidence of support from local host organisation (for example, submission co-signed by CEO or equivalent)		
8. Proposal on how the local host will engage with regional stakeholders to participate in the AM, including sponsorship outreach locally		
9. Provision of staff for the AM including guides and support staff, but also AV support/operators		
10. Provide a nominated 'project manager' or liaison (with authority to act) to work with the GDN Executive Director.		
11. Provide a safety and risk assessment but with a focus on inclusivity not exclusivity.		
Desirable		
12. Preferred lead time is 18 months / 2 years in advance so a meeting between the local hosts and the AMOC and Ed can be scheduled for the preceding year (e.g. Oslo is 2025, meeting with Board/AMOC is June 2024).		
13. Proposal for local cultural event to promote linkages to the local community and culture.		
14. Commitment to provide suitable meeting space for board meetings both prior and post the AM with zoom capability.		
Total		

13