

# ██████ Concept Paper

## Conference Cost Efficiency & Training Access Strategy

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### OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

**Focus Area:** Conference & Training Financial Strategy + Funding Alignment

**Timeline:**

- Immediate Planning: May-June 2026
- Pilot Implementation: Winter Conference (December 7-11, 2026)
- Near-Term Application: Command College (October 25-30, 2026)
- Optimization: Spring Conference 2027

**Summary:**

██████'s current conference and training model delivers high-value programming effectively but operates within structural constraints that limit participation, create financial inefficiencies, and require cross-subsidization across programs.

This concept outlines a strategic framework to reduce cost burdens for member agencies, increase participation, minimize wasted spending on venue minimums, and position ██████ to leverage sponsorships, partnerships, and external funding. The Winter 2026 Conference is proposed as a pilot opportunity to test targeted adjustments.

Without structural adjustments, OSSA will continue to face rising cost pressures, limited participation, and a constrained ability to expand training access.

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### CURRENT SNAPSHOT

#### Conference Model Overview

Based on preliminary data provided by ██████ leadership for the 2024-2026 conference cycles:

#### Spring Conference (2024 - 2026)

- Current Registrations: ~135 participants
- Historical High: ~170-180 participants

## Winter Conference (2024-2026)

- Attendance: ~300-350 participants

## Revenue (Recent Averages)

- Spring Registration Revenue: ~\$60,000
- Winter Registration Revenue: ~\$110,000
- Sponsorship Revenue: ~\$60,000 (Spring), ~\$124,000+ (Winter)

## Spring Conference Cost Structure

- Required Room Block: 200 rooms / 575 room nights

The current venue contract allows for a maximum lodging attrition adjustment of approximately 10%. Attendance below this threshold results in direct financial exposure for unused room nights.

- Current Registrations: ~135 → below threshold

This reflects a structural mismatch between contracted capacity and actual attendance that exceeds allowable lodging attrition thresholds, while fixed food and beverage minimums remain fully committed regardless of participation.

## Fixed Costs

- Food & Beverage Minimum: \$38,000
- Room Rental: \$2,300
- IT / AV Services: \$2,200
- Staff Lodging: \$5,300

## Upfront Financial Commitments

- Deposit: \$30,000
- Due 30 Days Prior: \$33,000

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## Training Program Snapshot (Deputy Academy Example)

- Enrollment Target: 42 participants
- Registration Fee: \$800
- Revenue: \$33,600

## Costs

- Lodging (210 room nights): ~\$34,000
- Food & Beverage Minimum: \$10,000

- Room Rental: \$900
- IT / AV: \$2,700
- Additional Staff Lodging: 6-8 rooms

### **Estimated Position**

- Direct Costs (partial): \$47,600+
- Revenue: \$33,600
- Estimated Gap: \$14,000+ (before full costs)

This gap persists despite full enrollment targets, indicating that pricing alone cannot resolve the financial imbalance.

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## **SYSTEM-LEVEL OBSERVATION**

██████'s current model relies on conference-generated revenue to offset structural deficits in training programs, while participation in both conferences and trainings is constrained by rising costs for member agencies. As a result, ██████ is balancing a model in which participation is constrained by cost, while financial sustainability depends on maintaining or increasing participation.

### **Key Constraints**

#### **1. Participation Cost Burden**

Agencies must absorb registration, travel, lodging, and overtime/backfill costs. These combined expenses significantly limit participation, particularly for smaller and rural counties.

#### **2. Fixed Cost Exposure**

Venue contracts require minimum lodging and food-and-beverage commitments. When attendance falls below these thresholds, ██████ absorbs the cost of unused contracted capacity, increasing the effective cost per attendee as participation declines.

#### **3. Revenue Constraints**

Exhibitor growth is limited by physical space. Registration pricing is sensitive to agency budgets.

#### **4. Training Program Deficits**

Programs such as Deputy Academy and Command College operate at a loss, requiring subsidy from conference revenue.

## 5. Venue Limitations

Current hosting structures reduce flexibility in pricing, scaling attendance, and adjusting cost drivers.

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### BOARD PRIORITIES

■■■■ leadership has identified the following goals:

- Reduce registration fees or provide complimentary registrations (e.g., two per county)
  - Increase participation statewide
  - Reduce wasted spending tied to unused lodging and food & beverage minimums
  - Explore alternative hosting models, including potential partnerships with tribal properties
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### STRATEGIC TENSION

Under the current model, reducing registration fees without offsetting revenue would further strain financial sustainability. At the same time, fixed cost commitments tied to lodging and food & beverage minimums create financial exposure when attendance falls below projections.

A coordinated strategy across pricing, participation, sponsorship, cost structure, and venue selection is required to address both challenges simultaneously.

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### STRATEGIC PATHWAYS

■■■■ has multiple viable pathways to address these challenges, each with different levels of impact, complexity, and timeline.

#### **Path 1: Cost Optimization Within Current Model**

- Reduce exposure to unused lodging and F&B minimums
- Improve attendance forecasting and alignment
- Maintain current pricing structure

#### **Outcome:**

Incremental improvements in efficiency with minimal disruption, but limited ability to reduce costs or significantly increase participation.

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## **Path 2: Balanced Access & Revenue Model**

- Introduce limited complimentary registrations or reduced pricing
- Expand sponsorship and revenue opportunities beyond booth capacity
- Improve cost alignment with actual attendance
- Increase participation through reduced cost barriers

### **Outcome:**

Supports near-term implementation for Winter 2026.

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## **Path 3: Strategic Shift & Expansion Model**

- Explore alternative venues, including tribal property partnerships
- Expand training delivery beyond conference model (regional or hybrid)
- Integrate grant funding and external revenue streams
- Reposition conferences within a broader statewide training strategy

### **Outcome:**

Highest potential for expanded access and long-term sustainability, with increased planning and implementation requirements.

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## **FUNDING ALIGNMENT**

A diversified funding approach will be required to support increased access while maintaining financial sustainability.

- **Grants:** Support training access, reduce participant cost burden
  - **Sponsorships:** Offset registration revenue and expand capacity
  - **Partnerships:** Enhance venue flexibility and reduce cost exposure
  - **Internal Optimization:** Reduce waste and improve efficiency
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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Proceed with a pilot approach using the Winter 2026 Conference to test targeted adjustments in pricing, cost structure, and revenue strategy, while simultaneously identifying funding opportunities to support training access.

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## NEXT STEPS

- Validate assumptions with updated Spring 2026 and Winter projections
- Identify immediate cost exposure reduction opportunities for Winter 2026
- Evaluate sponsorship expansion strategies
- Develop a funding pipeline aligned with training access goals
- Explore alternative venue options for 2027 and beyond