

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2025

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF



OHIO CHAPTER

The Budget Breakdown

- Budget Wins with the CVB
- Smart Event Planning
- Cut Cost Without Cutting Quality
- A GM Thoughts on Budgets
- Upcoming Events

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MPI OHIO CHAPTER.

Define is the official publication of the Ohio Chapter of Meeting Professionals International. It is published quarterly as a benefit of membership and circulated free of charge to MPIOH members.

Copyright, 2025. All rights reserved.

Permission requests to reproduce written materials should be sent to 4010 Executive Park Drive, Suite 100, Cincinnati, OH 45241.

Information appearing in this publication is obtained from sources we believe to be reliable. The information may not be a complete statement of all available data and is guaranteed as such. Calculations are based solely on editorial judgment and analysis of technical factors and meeting professional industry information sources. Define is copyrighted and portions may be reprinted with the permission of MPIOH. Define is not responsible for the contents of its advertisements and advises all members to investigate claims before making any purchases.



EXECUTIVE OFFICE.

REGINA PIERCEFIELD

4010 Executive Park Drive
Suite 100, Cincinnati, OH 45241

CONTACT

P: 513.563.8674

F: 513.563.9743

E: admin@mpioh.org

OUR MISSION.

To enhance the overall quality and awareness of the meetings industry by ensuring the professional development and growth of its membership through targeted educational programs and networking opportunities.

WHAT'S INSIDE



02

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

BY: ADAM KOWALESKI

03

MPI OHIO CHAPTER DIRECTORY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

04

NEW MEMBERS

HIGHLIGHT

05

OUR SPONSORS

HIGHLIGHT

06

STRATEGIES TO CUT COSTS WITHOUT CUTTING QUALITY...

BY: RYAN HARMON

08

MPI OHIO 5TH ANNUAL CORNAMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

10

WHAT YOUR HOTEL GM WISHES YOU KNEW ABOUT BUDGETS

BY: BRIAN CROOKS

14

MPI OHIO INVITE & INSPIRE

CONTEST INFORMATION

16

SMARTER EVENT PLANNING ON A BUDGET

BY: PATRICIA HUSTON

18

MPI WEC

HIGHLIGHTS

20

STRETCHING THE BUDGET? START WITH THE CVB

BY: SHAWN STIDHAM

22

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

23

AT YOUR SERVICE

MEMBER DIRECTORY

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



This quarter, the conversation across our industry has shifted. It is no longer just about what is possible. It is about what is possible within the budget. Whether you are a planner managing client expectations or a supplier navigating rising costs, we are all being asked to do more with less.

That is what makes this issue of DEFINE so timely. It is packed with real stories, practical strategies, and honest advice from professionals who know how to stretch a dollar and still deliver something memorable. From hotel need dates to creative linen choices, our contributors remind us that some of the best ideas come when resources are limited.

We have also seen that partnerships matter more than ever. Whether it is reaching out to a CVB before planning in a new city or collaborating with a hotel GM or rental partner, success rarely happens in a silo. It comes from local knowledge, mutual trust, and strong relationships.

As we look toward the end of the year and begin planning for 2026, I encourage each of us to keep asking the right questions. What is flexible? Where can we create real impact without overspending? And how can we maximize our MPI membership to build the connections that help us solve these challenges faster?

If this quarter has shown us anything, it is that our value is not defined by how much we spend. It is defined by how creatively we work, how well we adapt, and how connected we are to one another.

Proud to serve alongside you,

Adam Kowaleski
President, MPI Ohio Chapter



2025 MPI OHIO CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS



PRESIDENT

ADAM KOWALESKI
Sales Manager
Hotel Leveque
419.515.4377
adamkowaleski@firsthospitality.com



PRESIDENT ELECT

JOSH BRICKER STS, CTA
Sales Manager
Visit Dublin Ohio
614.792.7666
jbricker@visitdublinohio.com



PAST PRESIDENT

JASON LINSOTT
Regional Vice President
HPN Global
614.565.2617
JLinscott@HPNGlobal.com



VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

MARY DIMITRIJESKA
Marketing Director
Cherry Valley Hotel
740.788.1200
mdimitrijeska@cherryvalleyhotel.com



VICE PRESIDENT, EDUCATION

JANE LEE
Senior Planner/OUS Program Manager
Cardinal Health
614.757.1621
jane.lee@cardinalhealth.com



VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

PIERRE LE
Dir. of National Accounts, Midwest Regional Office
Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
615.571.4401
pierre@visitmusiccity.com



VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBERSHIP

LISA SWAN
Retired Planner
MPI Ohio
330.687.1881
lswan19@outlook.com



VICE PRESIDENT, SPECIAL EVENTS

LESLIANNE LAKE
Sales Manager
Visit Canton
330.542.6379
lesliannel@visitcanton.com



DIR. OF REGIONAL COUNCIL RELATIONS

JENNIFER VESELKO CITP CMP FELLOW
Event Strategist
Maritz Global Events
440.488.3537
jennifer.veselko@maritzselect.com



DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ANGELA HOFFORD DMCP
Business Development Mgr, Global Sales
PRA
602.762.1469
angela.hofford@pra.com



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

SHAWN STIDHAM
Vice President of Sales
Travel Butler County
513.526.0815
shawn@travelbutlercounty.com



DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP

BRANDON BLANKENSHIP
Hyatt Regency Cincinnati
Sales Manager
513.354.4072
brandon.blankenship@hyatt.com



DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EVENTS

RYAN HARMON, CERP
Director of Sales
Lasting Impressions Event Rental
216.223.4027
ryan@lirents.net



DIRECTOR OF MONTHLY PROGRAMS

PATRICIA HUSTON, CMP
Director of Conference and Event Services
Columbus State Community College
614.287.5761
Phuston4@csc.edu



DIRECTOR OF RECRUITMENT

SARAH FERRAGONIO
Sales Manager
Hilton Cleveland Downtown
216.413.5033
Sarah.Ferragonio@hilton.com



CHAPTER ADMINISTRATOR

REGINA PIERCEFIELD
Association Connection
4010 Executive Park Drive, Suite 100,
Cincinnati, OH 45241
513.563.8674
admin@mpioh.org

WELCOME *to our* *New* MEMBERS!

RICCO BAFFA

Colortone Staging & Rentals

NEAL PYSZKA

The Cincinnati Hotel

JALANA CAUGHEY

Le Meridien Columbus, The Joseph

RITA RAMEY

Creative Connections Studio

JASON DUNN

NCBMP

MARY ROCHFORD

The Ritz Carlton Cleveland

MICHELLE HOPEWELL

Oak View Group 360

GINENE ROTH LISBERGER

Meetings & Incentives Worldwide

JESSICA LATIN

JINI SION

MOLLY MINNICK

Dayton Convention Center

SHAUN STRAUSS

Super Storm Events LLC

MICHELLE PETTIES

THANK YOU *to our* *chapter* SPONSORS!



STRATEGIES TO CUT COSTS WITHOUT CUTTING QUALITY IN YOUR NEXT MEETING



In today's fast-paced meeting and events industry, managing budgets effectively is more important than ever—especially when clients expect exceptional, immersive experiences without breaking the bank. As the Director of Sales for an event rental company, I've seen firsthand how planners can smartly cut costs without compromising quality. Here are some practical tips and insights to help you deliver standout events even when budgets feel tight.

WHERE TO SPLURGE VS. WHERE TO SAVE

One of the most effective budget management strategies is knowing where to invest and where to scale back. Always splurge on elements that enhance guest experience and engagement—think comfortable seating, quality AV systems, and full service staff. These are the components attendees interact with most and can make or break the event's overall impression.

Conversely, you can save on décor elements by focusing on options that provide high visual impact without a hefty price tag. For example, if your venue includes simple linens in the contract, consider adding a pop of color with an overlay or specialty napkin to instantly elevate the look. Renting distinctive plates for salad or dessert courses is another affordable way to add sophistication. Additionally, work closely with your florist to identify flowers that are in season or being used for other nearby events around your date—this approach can help reduce floral costs while still achieving beautiful arrangements. Collaborating with your rental and floral partners to reuse or repurpose décor throughout the event space can also maximize your budget efficiently.



NEGOTIATING WITH VENDORS

Negotiation doesn't have to be intimidating. Develop a strong relationship with your suppliers and communicate your budget constraints candidly. Many vendors appreciate transparency and will often suggest creative alternatives or package deals. For example, bundling AV and lighting equipment rentals through one supplier can help you unlock discounts and simplify logistics. If there is a product or service you are in need of that a supplier does not offer - asking whom they refer is essential in having supplier partners that work well together to execute your event seamlessly.



PIVOTING WHEN BUDGETS SHIFT

Budget cuts mid-planning are all too common. The key is flexibility and open communication. Reassess priorities immediately and work with your team of suppliers to find cost-effective solutions. For instance, adjusting delivery and pickup schedules or selecting multi-use items can save both time and money. Reversible linens are a great option for multi-day events with so many fabrics now being offered in reversible.

At the end of the day, a successful event is about delivering value and memorable experiences. With smart planning and strategic partnerships, you can create impactful meetings that impress attendees—even when budgets tighten.



RYAN HARMON, CERP

Ryan is the Director of Sales at Lasting Impressions Event Rental in Cleveland, Ohio. With more than a decade of experience in events, sales, and strategic account management, Ryan leads with a client-focused approach to business development. He helps organizations grow through collaboration, creativity, and a deep understanding of what makes events and partnerships successful.

MPI OHIO HOSTS 5TH ANNUAL CORNAMENT



The MPI Ohio Chapter hosted its 5th Annual Cornament on August 14, 2025, bringing together meeting professionals for an afternoon of networking, friendly competition, and fundraising in both Columbus and Cleveland. The Columbus event was held at Land-Grant Brewing Co., while the Cleveland tournament took place at BrewDog Cleveland, with attendees from across the state showing up to support the chapter and enjoy a laid-back industry gathering.





WINNERS

COLUMBUS:

**HOLE LOTTA LEVEQUE AND
BAGSPINNERS OF BROADWAY**

Adam & Pierre

CLEVELAND:

TEAM SEESTER

Ashley Frisco (Hotel Cleveland)
and her sister Victoria Jones

*Thank you to
our event sponsors!*



What Your Hotel GM WISHES YOU KNEW ABOUT BUDGETS



I've been in hotels almost my whole life, which means I've seen every budget conversation from both sides of the table. Planners usually come in hoping for champagne results on a sparkling-wine budget, and hotels are trying to make the math work without cutting corners. The good news? There are ways to save that won't make either side cry into the P&L.

Timing is everything. If you can shift your conference by even a few days or choose a lighter week for travel, the savings can be huge. The weekdays before or after Memorial Day and Labor Day are often wide open and easier on the wallet. And Sunday check-ins? That's music to my ears. Booking your group arrival on a Sunday is the hotel GM equivalent of finding twenty bucks in a winter coat.

Here's one you might not think to ask: need dates. Every hotel has them. Sometimes we're staring at a month where the forecast is ugly and we're under pressure to close the gap. If you can place your meeting on one of those dates, suddenly the conversation shifts. Sales is more willing to negotiate, add value, or be flexible, because hitting that target matters to us almost as much as open bars matter to your attendees. It is the rare win-win in hotel math. Help us out, and we'll find a way to help you.

GMs love a lively hotel lobby. Nothing makes ownership happier than seeing a group gathered around the bar, laughing, and running a tab. If you're looking to trim setup costs, consider moving your cocktail hour out of the meeting space and into the lobby bar. Same networking, fewer labor fees, and a little more life in the building.

At the end of the day, budgeting is not about who can outsmart who. It's about finding those small adjustments that create value on both sides. Flexible timing, need dates, and the occasional Sunday arrival can stretch your budget further than you think. And if you pull it off, you might even have enough left to upgrade from sparkling wine to a champagne toast.



BRIAN CROOKS

General Manager,
Cherry Valley Hotel & Ohio Event Center

Brian Crooks is the General Manager of Cherry Valley Hotel & Ohio Event Center in Newark, Ohio. With more than 20 years in hospitality, he has led properties from golf resorts to downtown high-rises, navigating growth, turnarounds, and budgets along the way. He brings a candid and practical perspective to what makes hotels and planners successful.



THIS COULD BE YOU!



[LEARN MORE](#)

About MPI Ohio Chapter
Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities!

YOUR PRINT, MARKETING, EVENT & SIGNAGE SOLUTIONS!



MARKET
— YOUR COMPANY —



GRAPHIC DESIGN
COMMERCIAL PRINTING
TARGETED DIRECT MAIL
PROMOTIONAL & APPAREL



BRAND
— YOUR COMPANY —



BUILDING SIGNAGE
OFFICE WAYFINDING
VEHICLE GRAPHICS
TRADESHOW DISPLAYS



www.AllegraCinci.com

513.554.1797

www.Image360CinciBA.com

2026

Sponsorship & Advertising Opportunities



With over 2,000 industry contacts and more than \$100 million in planner buying power, MPI Ohio sponsorship puts your brand in front of the right people at the right time.

Top Benefits:

- Brand visibility across email, social, and live events
- Direct access to 2,000+ industry professionals
- Custom packages to fit your goals and budget



Let's Grow Together: Become
an MPI Ohio Sponsor

admin@mpioh.org

513.563.8674

www.mpioh.org/sponsorship





MPI®

OHIO
CHAPTER

INVITE & INSPIRE

February 1st - March 3rd, 2025



MPI Ohio is making networking even more rewarding with the Invite & Inspire Contest. Starting now through December 2025, every time you bring a guest to an MPI Ohio event, you'll earn an entry into our prize drawings. Just add their names to your registration and ensure they register as well. If your guest becomes a member, your entries double! Surprise prizes will be awarded throughout the year, and final winners will be revealed at Elevate in February 2026. Expand your network, inspire future members, and win big along the way.

INVITE & INSPIRE CONTEST

Help grow the MPI Ohio Chapter and win big.

The Invite & Inspire contest runs from April through December 31, 2025, and rewards members who bring guests to in-person MPI events.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Bring a guest to any in-person MPI event and you'll be entered into a prize drawing. If your guest becomes a member, your chances of winning are doubled.

The member with the most points at the end of the contest will win a \$100 VISA gift card.

Additional prizes will be awarded to participating members who bring guests.

Winners will be announced at Elevate in February 2026.

When registering for an event, be sure to list your guest's name on the registration form for tracking purposes. Your guest must still register separately. If you are paying for your guest, use the "Add a Group Member" option before completing payment.



►►► **FOR A REWARD** ◀◀◀

Members with renewal dates between October 1 - December 31, 2025, will be automatically entered into a drawing to win free registration to one 2026 MPI Ohio Chapter Meeting.*

admin@mpioh.org

513.563.8674

www.mpioh.org/sponsorship

*Excluding Navigate and the Joint Industry Conference



PATRICIA HUSTON

Patricia Huston, CMP, BA in Political Science (OSU), is an accomplished Director of Conference & Event Services based in Columbus, Ohio. With over 25 years of experience spanning both the corporate and public sectors, she brings strategic insight and operational excellence to every event she leads.

In today's hospitality landscape, planners are constantly challenged to deliver exceptional events while staying within tighter budgets. The good news? Cost savings don't have to mean compromise. With a bit of creativity and strategic collaboration, you can trim expenses while elevating the guest experience. Here are three smart, proven strategies that strike the perfect balance.



GO DIGITAL WITH QR CODES INSTEAD OF PAPER PROGRAMS

Say goodbye to stacks of printed agendas and hello to sleek, sustainable tech. Using QR codes in lieu of paper programs is a triple win:

COST-EFFECTIVE:

Eliminates printing and design expenses.

CONVENIENT:

Attendees can access event details instantly from their phones.

ECO-FRIENDLY:

Reduces paper waste and reinforces your brand's commitment to green initiatives.

BONUS TIP:

Customize your QR landing page with real-time updates, speaker bios, and interactive maps to enhance engagement.

ALIGN YOUR EVENT DATES WITH VENUE NEED PERIODS

Timing is everything—especially when it comes to venue negotiations. Hotels aim to maximize occupancy, and planners who understand their booking cycles can unlock serious savings. Here's how:

FLEXIBILITY PAYS OFF:

Ask your venue about “need dates”—periods when they're eager to fill rooms.

BUNDLE BOOKINGS:

If your group can be paired with another, hotels may offer reduced sleeping room rates and even waive meeting space rental.

EXAMPLE:

A hotel with 400 rooms may be more flexible if Group A (250 rooms) and Group B (100 rooms) book over the same dates. The hotel gets closer to a sell-out, and you get better rates. It's a win-win.



PARTNER WITH CULINARY TEAMS FOR SMARTER MENU PLANNING

Food and beverage costs can quickly balloon—but with the right insights, you can guide clients toward delicious, budget-friendly choices. One hotel's Executive Chef turned menu rollout into a masterclass for the catering team:

UNDERSTAND FOOD COSTS:

Learn the price impact of substitutions (e.g., steak vs. chicken).

BUFFET VS. PLATED:

Buffets often cost more due to lack of portion control.

OFFER SMART SWAPS:

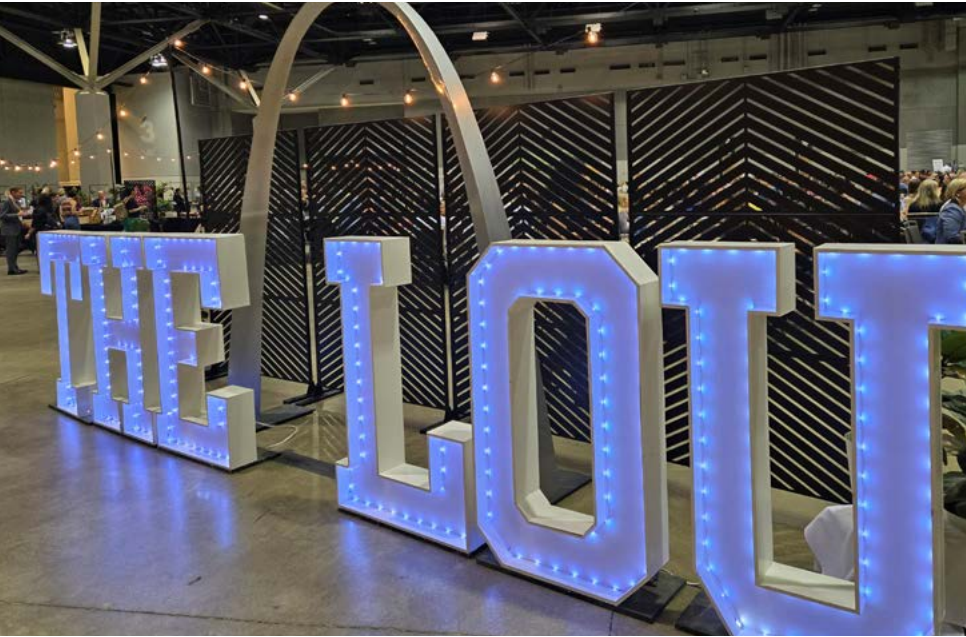
Suggest cookies and brownies instead of premium desserts like cheesecake to reduce costs without sacrificing satisfaction.

This kind of cross-departmental training empowers catering managers to make informed recommendations and fosters stronger collaboration with culinary teams.



Cutting costs doesn't mean cutting corners. By embracing digital tools, leveraging venue partnerships, and deepening your understanding of F&B economics, you can deliver high-impact events that respect both the budget and the guest experience. Smart planning is the new luxury—and your clients will thank you for it.

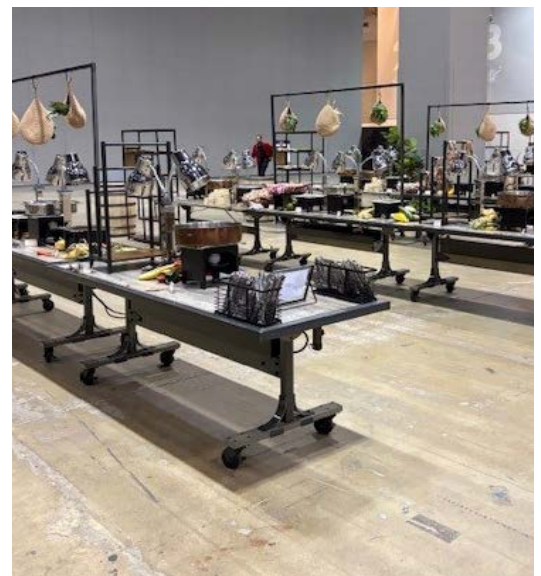
HIGHLIGHTS MPI WEC



From June 18 to 20, MPI members from around the world gathered in St. Louis for the 2025 World Education Congress (WEC), and MPI Ohio was proud to represent the Buckeye State.

WEC is a hands-on, high-impact experience that blends real-world training, expert-led education, and unmatched networking with some of the most passionate professionals in meetings and events.

Our Ohio members left energized with new ideas, stronger connections, and strategies they are already putting into practice.





Stretching the Budget?

Start with the CVB



If you're reading this, you probably already know that planning meetings and events, while rewarding, can also be time-consuming and stressful. That's why one of the smartest first steps a planner can take is reaching out to the destination's convention and visitors bureau (CVB). In fact, if you're working in a location that you've never planned in before, it should be a requirement.

Why?

CVBs know their community better than anyone. They have the inside scoop on venues, hotels, and local hidden gems. For example, your clients have a pop-up meeting for next month that requires a meeting space with plenty of natural light for 75 attendees with three breakout rooms AND they prefer Hilton hotels AND need an off-site restaurant within walking distance for dinner. Instead of spending hours searching online, a quick call to the CVB could answer these questions with expert insights, which can save a planner time and stress.

Beyond logistics like hotel blocks, venue sourcing, or off-site options, CVBs often unlock unique experiences that elevate events. Recently, a planner shared she had a group with beer enthusiasts and wanted to do something special for them. Our CVB was able to work with a local renowned brewery owner who created a custom five-course brunch paired with craft beers and guided by a local chef as well as the owner. This wasn't a standard banquet menu option, it was an unforgettable and unique experience, which is exactly what every planner wants.

CVBs also often provide visitor guides or welcome bags to attendees to help enhance the experience. Again, at little to no cost to you.

More than just a resource, CVBs become your partner, unlocking local expertise, partnerships, and experiences that turn a good event into a standout success.



Shawn is Vice President of Sales at Travel Butler County, with over 20 years of experience in hospitality and destination marketing. He partners with planners and organizations to deliver exceptional meetings, events, and group travel experiences.



Shawn Stidham
8756 Union Centre Blvd.
West Chester, Ohio 45069

● MARK YOUR CALENDAR.



October 15 2025

Chapter Meeting

The Summit Hotel - Cincinnati OH

November 6 2025

Member Mixer

*Cincinnati, Cleveland,
Columbus OH*

November 12 2025

**Maximize Your Membership -
Level Up, Lean In, Look Ahead**

Virtual - ZOOM

February 23 & 24 2026

Navigate Conference

Embassy Suites - Dublin OH



**All dates & locations
are subject to change*

Host the Next MPI Ohio Chapter Meeting!

Spotlight your hotel, property or meeting space by sponsoring an MPIOH Chapter luncheon! In addition to gaining immediate exposure to meeting professionals attending the event, your hotel will receive exposure to MPI Ohio Chapter members and non-members throughout Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Indiana with over \$1,600 of sponsorship advertising.

Call or email **Leslianne Lake**, Director of Strategic Partnerships,
to secure your date at [**education@mpioh.org**](mailto:education@mpioh.org)

● AT YOUR SERVICE.

TO ACCESS MPI OHIO MEMBER DIRECTORY

www.mpi.org/membership/member-directory



OHIO
CHAPTER



TO ATTEND A BOARD MEETING

Contact: Adam Kowaleski

419.515.4377

Email: OfficeOfPresident@mpioh.org

TO GET INVOLVED WITH BOARD/COMMITTEE

Visit: www.MPIOH.org or

Email: Admin@mpioh.org to join a committee

TO SPONSOR AN MPI OHIO MEETING/EVENT

Contact: The MPI Ohio Office

513.563.8674

Email: Admin@mpioh.org

TO RECEIVE MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Contact: The MPI Ohio Office

513.563.8674

Email: Admin@mpioh.org

Join Online: www.MPIweb.org

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR NEWSLETTER

Contact: The MPI Ohio Office

513.563.8674

Email: Admin@mpioh.org

TO RECEIVE INFORMATION REGARDING THE CMP CERTIFICATION/STUDY GROUPS

Contact: The MPI Ohio Office

513.563.8674

Email: Admin@mpioh.org

SUBMIT AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR NEWSLETTER

Contact: The MPI Ohio Office

513.563.8674

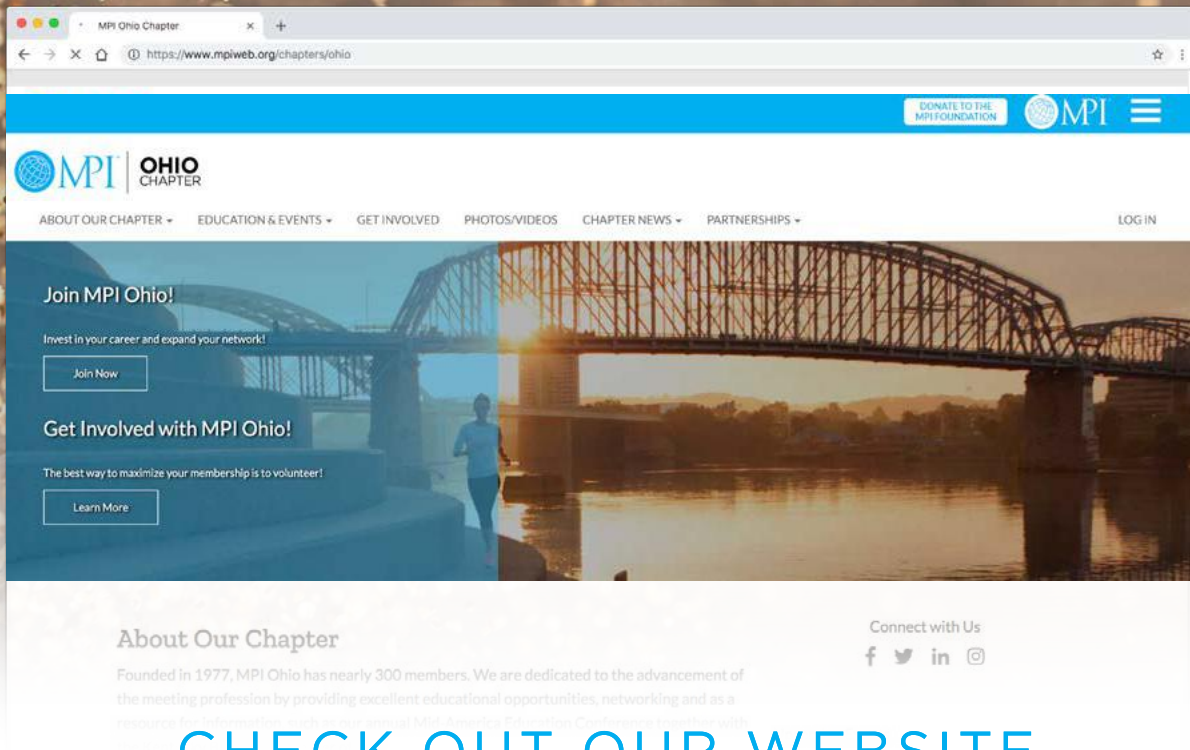
Email: Admin@mpioh.org

JOIN MPI OHIO'S SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

To connect to our Social Media & LinkedIn accounts

Visit: www.MPIOH.org





CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE
www.mpioh.org



Join our Group Forums at <http://u.MPI.org> where MPI members can engage in conversations, ask questions, share best practices, and network with the world's most vibrant online community.



They say learn something new everyday. There is no easier way than participating in our LinkedIn group at “**MPI Ohio Chapter.**”

You may even teach your peers a thing or two!



To stay in the loop, be sure to follow us at “**MPI Ohio Chapter**”



Follow us! Tag us!
@MPIOH #MPIOH #MPI