



Women in Aerospace
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To: WIA Members
From: Dianne Sosa, Chair of National Expansion Task Force & Vice Chair of WIA Board of Directors
Date: November 15, 2012
RE: Update on WIA National Expansion

Introduction

When Women in Aerospace was founded, it was on the principles of being dedicated to expanding women's opportunities for leadership and increasing their visibility in the aerospace community. WIA started as a Washington, DC based organization 27 years ago and has continued to see tremendous growth and advancement through the years. We are so proud of all that we have accomplished and look forward to our continuous years of growth in our future. As WIA looks at one of our goals for the future, we remain committed to identifying ways to capture the essence of WIA and continue to expand it on national level.

Pilot Program

One way that WIA experimented with having a presence on a national level was through the concept of chapters. In 2010, the WIA Board of Directors approved a pilot program to see if having local chapters would be an ideal way for WIA to expand nationally to best meet our needs. Throughout the past eighteen months, WIA was pleased to embark on a pilot chapter program that allowed us to explore the possibility of having chapters in three distinct areas within the United States. WIA intentionally referred to these chapters as "pilot chapters" while we were in the assessment phase to identify what was working well, what would need to be done differently and if WIA could sustain this model for the future. The pilot chapters were established to be simple, networking opportunities at local levels. WIA learned a considerable amount throughout this pilot chapter phase, capturing the lessons learned in a significant report and consulting with our legal counsel for advice. From there, the WIA Board of Directors established a task force to review the evaluation documentation and to determine the best next steps for WIA.

Next Steps and Recommendations

WIA feels strongly that providing the opportunity to expand on a national level is an important goal that we will continue to work toward all of our future goals and plans. However, there were key fundamental lessons that WIA learned throughout the pilot program that helped us recognize that the formal chapter model is not a sustainable and long term solution for WIA at this time. This does not mean that WIA is not committed to having a national presence, however. Many things have changed since the days when the original chapter model was created, long before technology played such a role in the way we network, communicate, attend events and connect with each other. As WIA continues to look at ways to focus on national expansion for the future, we will consider all aspects of utilizing technology, being innovative and still capturing the essence of what makes WIA unique in our industry.

WIA plans to appoint an individual to the Board of Directors that will be responsible for focusing on National Expansion to focus on all of these key pieces. This person will be responsible for looking at innovative ways to continue to expand WIA on a national basis, utilizing technology and our resources.

Furthermore, WIA plans to hold a major event each year at a location outside the Washington, DC area. This event will continue to uphold WIA's innovative and quality program that we've become known for in the Washington, DC area, in addition to having a networking event for all attendees. Furthermore, we'll invite all attendees to join WIA as members and/or begin to follow WIA on our Facebook and LinkedIn accounts to begin networking locally for connecting as we continue to bring members together across the nation. It is our plan that members will continue their connections virtually long after the WIA event takes place.

In addition, WIA will expand their professional development program that is offered virtually. We will encourage members to gather locally across the nation to dial into our professional development series and then to network after the events. Additionally, members can dial into these meetings as they wish.

Finally, WIA is looking into ways to enhance the way we deliver our events, by looking at ways to provide them virtually so that others from around the nation may join in, adding in webinar capabilities, and to provide the events via podcasts after the event takes place. This will be a longer term goal for WIA, but one we are committed to achieving.

Looking Ahead to WIA's Future

At this time, we have concluded our formal pilot chapter program. We will not have any formal WIA chapters in any regions within the United States. However, it is our hope that our members in these regions will continue to network, connect and meet on an informal and regular basis. We encourage our members to continue to build on the relationships that have been made and to continue to make new connections through WIA's virtual networks. We also encourage our members to participate in WIA's professional development programs and to join us for our National Conference that will take place annually each June.

Recognition

WIA would like to take a moment to acknowledge the volunteers in our local regions that were responsible for leading the way for our pilot chapter program. These leaders were instrumental in leading an active pilot chapter during the past 18 months and were a key asset in allowing WIA to gather the necessary data to come to this recommendation for our future. We sincerely appreciate the leadership, dedication and guidance that the leaders of these regions provided to WIA. Thank you! To any of our members in these local regions that may have questions about our national expansion efforts, please feel free to contact us at info@womeninaerospace.org or via telephone at 202-547-0229.