ARO Council Meeting Minutes

Date: September 25, 2025

Attendees: Kristin Johnson, Alan Cheng, Mike Bowl, Lisa Cunningham, Sunil Puria, Radha Kalluri, Jeffrey Holt, Laura Reynolds, Bri Garza, Ronna Hertzano, Katharine Fernandez, Anna Lysakowski

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Clinician Scientist Committee Update

Summary:

Dr. Alan Chang shared updates on the committee's quarterly webinars, international engagement, and a successful in-person networking event at the 2025 MidWinter Meeting (MWM). He proposed a dedicated session for clinical trials and translational research to be held annually on Sunday of the MWM to attract clinician attendance.

Decisions Made:

- Council supportive of continuing quarterly webinars.
- General enthusiasm for a session covering clinical trials.
- Council encouraged further exploration of logistics via a committee initiative to submit the session for review during the annual symposia/special session call.

Action Items:

- Alan Chang to explore logistics and report back to Council.
- Kristin to facilitate connection with Development, Mentorship, and Advancement Committee (DMAC) to explore making this session a committee initiative as the DMAC has done with their annual special session/symposia submissions.

3. 2026 Meeting Budget Review

Summary:

Kristin Johnson and the Meetings team (Laura Reynolds and Bri Garza) presented the proposed budget for the 2026 ARO meeting in Puerto Rico. Budget scenarios were based on projected attendance derived from abstract submissions. Topics included insurance coverage, AV contracts, transportation logistics, and food/beverage costs.

Decisions Made:

- Approved AVFX for a three-year contract with a performance clause to terminate if service issues are experienced again.
- Approved the 2026 meeting budget based on 125% projected attendance over 2025 attendance. This is because there is a strong correlation between abstract submissions and attendance in that attendance is consistently an average of 203% over the abstract submission number. That number is projected to be 2000 attendees. With last year's attendance at ~1600, a 125% increase over last year puts us at the projected 2000 attendees.
- Shuttle transportation to be provided for remote hotel attendees. Estimated cost of $50k currently.

Action Items:

- Kristin to finalize full fiscal year budget including administrative components.
- Executive Office to negotiate shuttle costs and finalize AV contract with termination clause.
- Meetings department to monitor registration trends and adjust logistics accordingly.

4. Business Meeting Renaming Proposal

Summary:

Council discussed renaming the "Business Meeting" to "ARO General Assembly" to improve attendance and inclusivity. The name change aims to better reflect the meeting's purpose and encourage broader participation. The agenda for the ARO General Assembly will still include a Business Meeting section. This is required to satisfy the ARO Bylaws.

Decisions Made:

- Unanimous approval to rename the Business Meeting to "ARO General Assembly".

Action Items:

- Executive Office to implement name change in all meeting materials and communications.

5. Abstract Submission and Attendance Projections

Summary:

Kristin reported a record-breaking 1,082 abstract submissions. Historical data shows a consistent correlation between abstract numbers and attendance (average 203%). This data was used to project attendance and inform budget planning.

Decisions Made:

- Attendance projections to be based on abstract submission data.
- Budget planning to be validated using historical correlation metrics moving forward.

Action Items:

- Executive Office to track abstract-to-attendance ratios annually for future planning.

6. Nominating Committee Slate Approval

Summary:

Council reviewed and unanimously approved the slate of nominees for President-Elect, Council Member at Large, Secretary Treasurer, and Nominating Committee positions. The slate was presented in rank order with alternates prepared.

Decisions Made:

- Approved the full slate of nominees as presented by the Nominating Committee.

Action Items:

- Kristin to report Council approval back to the Nominating Committee.
- Nominating Committee Chairs to begin sending out invitations in rank order.

7. Program Committee and Symposium Allocation Discussion

Summary:

Council discussed the Program Committee's decision to accept 11 symposia, exceeding the recommended 25% cap (9 symposia). While the quality of submissions was acknowledged, concerns were raised about adherence to Council recommendations and the importance of process transparency. Some expressed that they felt that the Program Committee had adhered to the agreement and exercised the flexibility included in the agreement. It was proposed that, in the future, the Program Committee Chair should bring any submissions they would like to accept beyond the 25% back to Council for approval.

Decisions Made:

- Council agreed that selections for this year are excellent and will not be changed.
- Program Committee acknowledged Council's concerns and committed to improved communication moving forward.

Action Items:

- Executive Office and Program Committee to monitor the number of abstracts that select poster only versus the number that select podium consideration. This metric can be used to determine if interest in podium talks is shifting. For this year, 44.5% of abstract submitters elected to be considered for a podium talk.

Summary

The Council meeting covered updates from the Clinician Scientist Committee, budget planning for the 2026 meeting, renaming the Business Meeting, abstract submission trends, nominee approvals, and symposium allocation concerns. The meeting demonstrated strong collaboration and forward planning across committees.

Decisions Made (Consolidated)

- AVFX approved for three-year contract with termination clause.
- 2026 meeting budget approved based on 125% over last year as projected attendance.
- Shuttle transportation must be provided from Hilton Garden Inn hotel.
- Business Meeting renamed to "ARO General Assembly".
- Abstract-to-attendance correlation adopted for planning.
- Nominating Committee slate approved.

Action Items (Consolidated)

- Alan Cheng to explore logistics for clinical trials session as a committee initiative like the ARO DMAC and report back.
- Kristin to use approved MWM budget to finalize the 2026 budget.
- Meetings department to finalize AV contract and shuttle negotiations.

- Executive Office to implement “ARO General Assembly” name change in MWM planning and communications.
- Kristin to report approval of candidates to the Nominating Committee.
- Executive Office and Program Committee to track number of poster only abstracts versus number of abstracts requesting a podium year over year.