
Will the 2021 National Leadership and Skills Conference be held in-person as originally scheduled? If not, what format will it take?

SkillsUSA's National Leadership and Skills Conference and SkillsUSA Championships will be held virtually in 2021, with localized hands-on elements for select competitions. Along with all of our competitive events, the conference will also include SkillsUSA TECHSPO, delegate sessions, national officer elections and many opportunities for leadership development, professional development and member/chapter recognition. Specific dates, times and details are still being finalized and will be made available soon.

Why was the decision made to hold a virtual conference?

Our decision was based mainly on the following factors:

1. The safety and security of our membership and stakeholders.

With so much still unclear as to when large face-to-face gatherings will be deemed safe and when the effects of the virus will finally subside, we could not in good conscience move forward with the planning of an in-person event bringing thousands of our members and stakeholders together from across the country.

2. State associations not being able to travel to Atlanta for an in-person event.

a. Statewide travel restrictions

In a survey conducted in October, 23 state associations revealed that imposed travel restrictions in their states would prevent them from attending the national conference. With the increase of COVID cases nationwide, more states have since been added to that list.

b. State budgetary restrictions and redirected travel funds.

Numerous additional states have redirected travel funds to other needed budget shortfalls during this pandemic. This redirection of funds also directly affects the ability for states to travel, even where travel restrictions are not in place.

Without the participation of our states, a national conference cannot happen.

3. Lack of on-site preparation time for national staff.

2021 was scheduled to be our first year in Atlanta, so it was more important than ever that our staff make multiple visits to the event sites months ahead of time to prepare competition and meeting spaces, review safety procedures, identify event locations and more. Our staff has not been able to visit Atlanta since last February, and most of our state directors have not had the opportunity to visit at

all. At this time, it's unclear when those visits would be able to occur, and without that in-person planning, we cannot successfully hold an in-person event.

4. Restrictions on partners' ability to travel and participate in an in-person event.

Our partners are facing similar issues with travel restrictions and budgetary obstacles as referenced above, and many have expressed concern that they will be unable to travel and participate in an in-person event in 2021. Most, however, remain committed to supporting and participating in the virtual events we're currently planning.

Why was this decision made so early?

We felt it was crucial to make the decision now so that state associations, technical committees, partners and all of our other stakeholders would have adequate time to prepare for high-quality national and state conferences without wasting valuable time preparing for other scenarios that are very unlikely to occur. This will help ensure that local and state agencies feel confident that their state conferences and our national conference will live up to the high standards of quality and rigorous competition that SkillsUSA is known for.

It was also important for us to be a good partner to our friends in Atlanta and notify them as soon as possible of the inability of our students and teachers to attend the national conference in-person.

Will the SkillsUSA Championships still be happening? If so, how?

Yes! We will still be conducting ALL of the SkillsUSA Championships competitions this year. The guidelines have been revised for each competition to reflect the virtual nature of the event. All competitions will be judged — and many will be conducted — virtually. However, some will require localized areas where hands-on skills will be performed by competitors and overseen by an instructor and a proctor to ensure safety, quality and integrity in all competitions. These hands-on elements will also be documented, and that documentation will be shared with national judges as part of the virtual judging process.

Details are still being finalized, but rest assured: the skills of our competitors WILL be put to the test once again this year as they're judged against tough national standards. We WILL name national bronze, silver and gold medalists, and our partners — as they have always done — will be eager to meet and hire the best career and technical education students in the nation. Look for more information soon.

Will 2021-22 national officers be elected?

Yes! Similar to last year, delegate sessions will be held and national officers will be elected at the national conference.

Will SkillsUSA TECHSPO still be happening?

Yes. We are currently working on the format for this event, but we will be holding a virtual version of our highly popular SkillsUSA TECHSPO event, and our members will once again have valuable opportunities to connect with representatives from industry and education. More information to come soon.

Will SkillsUSA partners be involved in the national conference, and will there be opportunities to connect with them?

Yes. Our partners want to be heavily involved in this event, and they want to connect with our members as much as our members want to connect with them. Those opportunities will be available, but details are still being worked on. More information will be forthcoming.

Will state leadership and skills conferences still be held?

Each state association will ultimately make the decision to hold a state conference. However, the national organization is working diligently to support each state association to ensure they'll be able to hold state events that members will be excited and proud to participate in.

Are all states holding virtual competitions that lead up to nationals?

While that is our goal, each state association will make the decision on the delivery of their state leadership and skills conference based on the pandemic-related safety requirements of their state. More information will be posted on our website and social media, but, in the meantime, it's always a good idea to stay up to date on what's happening in your state through your state association's website and social media channels. To find contact information for your state association, visit:

<https://www.skillsusa.org/about/state-directors/>.

When will virtual competition rules and requirements be provided to participants?

The virtual competition rules (technical standards) are posted at absorb.skillsusa.org and are currently available to all SkillsUSA professional members.



Will there be programming outside of the SkillsUSA Championships to participate in?

Yes. There will be many opportunities beyond our competitive events to interact with members from across the country, meet with partners, participate in leadership development and more. A schedule of conference programming will be posted for membership to review on Jan. 15. You'll be able to find that schedule at nlsc.skillsusa.org.

Is this going to be just another Zoom conference?

No, this event will NOT be just another Zoom conference. (We've all had our fill of those.) We will be working with a company (as yet unnamed) specializing in virtual events to create a unique, exciting, user-friendly and option-rich environment for all our members. In fact, the virtual format we're working on may provide even MORE opportunities to make connections with future employers, mentors and friends. This will be an EVENT, an event members, partners and more will want to be a part of and will be proud to have participated in. More information will be coming soon.

When will we go to Atlanta for a conference?

We hope to finally return to an in-person National Leadership and Skills Conference in June 2022, and that will be held in Atlanta.

What will be the conference fee for NLSC and state conferences?

The NLSC registration fee will be \$95. In January, we'll be announcing more events associated with the NLSC that will take place in May. These events will be \$25 per chapter, with no limit on the number of members who can participate. Again, specific information on these events will be coming in January. As in the past, each state association will determine the fee structure to participate in each state conference.

Where can I find the latest NLSC information?

Stay connected to the SkillsUSA website (skillsusa.org), our NLSC landing page (nlsc.skillsusa.org) and our social media channels for more information as we have it.