

**WAC 458-20-256 Trade shows, conventions and seminars.** (1) When a trade show, convention or educational seminar is sponsored and held by a nonprofit trade or nonprofit professional organization for a group other than the general public, the sponsoring organization may deduct from its business and occupation tax measure all "attendance" or "space" charges it collects for such an event, per RCW 82.04.4282. Nonqualifying organizations, and qualifying organizations sponsoring nonqualifying events, must include "attendance" and "space" charges in their tax measure for purposes of computing service and other activity business and occupation tax thereon.

(2) Nonprofit organizations are taxed in the same fashion as profit-making individuals or groups, with but few tax exemptions. This section implements one of those exemptions. See also WAC 458-20-114 and 458-20-169.

(3) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) The term "nonprofit" means exempt from tax under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code. The tax exempt status must be in effect when the trade show, convention, or seminar is conducted.

(b) A "trade organization" is an entity whose members are engaged "in trade", i.e., in one or more lawful commercial trades, businesses, crafts, industries, or distinct productive enterprises.

(c) A "professional organization" is an entity whose members are engaged in a particular lawful vocation, occupation or field of activity of a specialized nature.

(d) A "trade show" is a gathering of persons in trade for the purpose of exhibiting, demonstrating, and explaining services, products and/or equipment.

(e) A "convention" is a gathering of persons in trade or a profession for the purposes of providing, publishing and exchanging information, ideas and attitudes and conducting the business of the organization.

(f) A "seminar" is a gathering of persons in trade or a profession for the purpose of research, study, and/or exchange of specialized information, ideas and attitudes in regard to that trade or profession.

(g) "Not open to the general public" means that attendance is limited to members of the sponsoring organization and to specific invited guests of the sponsoring organization.

(4) As of July 23, 1989, for purposes of computing taxable receipts subject to business and occupation tax, a qualifying "nonprofit" organization may deduct all amounts the organization collects as charges for

(a) Admissions, and

(b) Licenses to occupy space in order to display exhibits, equipment and/or goods, at an organization-sponsored trade show, convention or seminar not open to the general public.

(5) No statutory deduction is available for the following:

(a) Outright sales of tangible personal property or services for which a specific charge separate from the charge for attending or occupying space is made. It is only those charges which are paid for the express privilege of attending or exhibiting at such an event which are deductible; and

(b) Admission or space charges for purely social, recreational, entertainment or other nontrade or nonprofessional gatherings regardless of the nonprofit tax status of the sponsoring organization.

(6) Examples:

(a) The local building trade council (council) organizes and sponsors a trade show held for specialty and general housing contractors. Council has on file a letter of tax exemption under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code. Council collects \$100.00, prepaid, from each exhibitor for licenses to display and exhibit construction equipment, tools and related wares at preassigned booths, and \$5.00, paid at the door, from each contractor who attends the event. Because the sponsoring organization qualifies as a nonprofit trade organization, the event qualifies as a trade show sponsored by the organization, and it is not open to the general public, all of the amounts collected constitute deductible receipts of admission and/or space charges.

(b) The metropolitan business group (metro), a recognized tax-exempt organization under IRC Section 501, organizes and sponsors a convention for all of its businesses members. Following completion of regular metro business matters (election of officers, etc.), there are speeches by accountants, attorneys, bankers, financial consultants, city planners, and other persons able to give legal and business advice and information to those attending. Metro charges a \$25.00 per person entry fee. Included with the program is a hosted luncheon at which the mayor gives an explanation of local governmental regulations. The entry charges are fully deductible by Metro from its business and occupation tax measure. The sponsoring organization is "non-profit" and a "trade organization" because its members are generically "in trade" even though not all are members of just one trade. The event constitutes a convention for persons "in trade" (generic, not specific) and the event is not open to the public. Finally, the moneys collected all constitute admission charges, no special charge for the meal having been made.

(c) The eastside whiffle ball association (association), a corporation recognized in writing to be tax exempt under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, holds a "skills" clinic for all interested persons. The association charges \$3.00 to all attending, which is just sufficient to cover the cost of materials and the use of a facility. Following the event, a special barbecue is held for \$4.00 extra per participant. Souvenirs imprinted with the association name are also available for extra charge. The \$3.00 admission charges, the \$4.00 dinner charges, and the souvenir charges must all be included in the association's B&O tax measure for the following reasons, each one of which disallows the deduction:

- (i) The association is not a trade or professional organization,
- (ii) The event is not a trade show, convention or seminar, and
- (iii) The event is open to the public. Separate dinner and souvenir charges are nondeductible in any event because they constitute itemized charges for goods and services.

(d) A local concerned citizen group (group), which has never applied for federal tax exempt status, organizes and sponsors a health care seminar held in the local school auditorium for district health care professionals, nurses, sport trainers, parents, and concerned students. To cover the cost of hiring competent medical experts to speak at the seminar, the group charges \$5.00 per person. The event is sponsored by the group for a worthwhile public purpose and the entry fees are in fact admission charges. For the following reasons, each one of which disallows the deduction, the group will have to include all door charges in its tax measure: (i) The sponsoring organization is not properly recognized to be nonprofit (no federal tax recognition) or to be a trade or professional organization, and (ii) the event is open to the public at large.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300. WSR 90-04-058, § 458-20-256,  
filed 2/2/90, effective 3/5/90.]