

IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition 2027

Guidelines for Venue Proposal

February 2026

A. Introduction

The IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition (WDCE) is the biennial global event on water solutions for developing and emerging countries. It is normally held every 2 years in a lower- or middle-income country and attracts up to 3,000 delegates and participants. The WDCE serves the following core functions:

- Setting the agenda on water, sanitation and sustainable development in low- and middle-income countries, integrating science, engineering, policy, finance and service delivery practice.
- Promoting evidence-based, practical and scalable water and sanitation solutions that address public health, climate resilience, resource recovery and inclusive service provision.
- Providing a global platform for utilities, regulators, policymakers, researchers, NGOs, development agencies and practitioners to exchange operational experience and lessons learned.
- Enabling strong participation from developing countries and emerging economies, with particular emphasis on capacity building, young professionals and utility strengthening.
- Strengthening IWA's role as a trusted global convener in the development space and promoting sustained membership engagement in priority regions.

As a flagship event of the Association, IWA retains overall authority and decision-making control over the conduct of the WDCE through its Board of Directors and Executive Director.

The WDCE is organised by IWA in collaboration with a local partner. Within this framework, IWA maintains oversight of governance, programme content, branding and financial management.

To ensure alignment with IWA's objectives and standards, the local partner must be a financially viable entity with strong institutional capacity, an established local network within the water sector, and a recognised reputation among water and development professionals.

B. WDCE Selection and Procedure Overview

Phase One: Proposal development and selection

1. Call for Expressions of Interest

IWA Secretariat issues an invitation for preliminary expressions of interest to host the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition in 2027 from IWA Governing Members and other partners in lower- and middle-income countries.

2. Receipt of Expression of Interest

Expressions of Interest to host the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition in 2027 are to be received by IWA Secretariat within the specified time limit.

3. Call for Full Proposals

IWA Secretariat issues the proposal instructions and pro-forma framework agreement to invited proposers.

4. Receipt and Evaluation of the Full Proposals

The secretariat undertakes screening and evaluation to ensure that proposals meet the minimum requirements for hosting the congress and consults with the Board to develop a shortlist.

5. Development of Preliminary Short-List

Proposers are preliminarily short-listed by the IWA Secretariat and Board. Site visits of those locations that have been short-listed are conducted based on submitted proposals. All aspects of the proposal and proposing entity are considered in the course of preparing and conducting site visits.

6. Development of a Final Short-List

If through the site visit process, it is determined that a short-listed candidate is not institutionally or financially capable of hosting the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition, the IWA Secretariat in consultation with the Board of Directors eliminates such a candidate from further consideration.

7. Call for Best and Final Proposals

Remaining short-listed candidates are asked to submit Best and Final Proposals. Proposals must be structured to ensure comparability across the key financial and operational dimensions specified in this RFP. Proposals that are inconsistent with the basic terms of the pro-forma Framework Agreement provided to proposers at the beginning of the process (Step 4) are regarded as non-responsive and are eliminated from further consideration.

8. Development of Recommendations

The secretariat undertakes an evaluation and comparison and reports its findings to the Board.

9. Selection of Preferred Candidate

The preferred candidate is decided by the IWA Board. The Board's decision is based on the Best and Final Proposals, the evaluation by the secretariat, consideration of the preferences expressed by the Governing Members, and from presentations by and question and answer sessions with each of the shortlisted candidates.

Phase Two: Negotiation and endorsement of Framework Agreement

10. Negotiation of a Framework Agreement

Once the negotiation process is complete and a successful framework agreement is reached, then that venue is formally designated as the selected venue.

Phase Three: Reaffirmation of intentions and qualifications

11. Update Framework Agreement and Overall Budget

The framework agreement, negotiated at the time of final selection, is updated and a project budget agreed. Failure to reach agreement on these points would also be grounds for termination/de-selection.

Other grounds of termination include financial insolvency, material reputational risk, visa barriers, political instability, and failure to meet financial underwriting thresholds.

12. If Necessary, Initiate Termination/New Selection Process

To ensure that institutional and personal circumstances are still acceptable to IWA (and/or to the local partner), an "off-ramp" would be created that would allow termination/de-selection if the changed circumstances were deemed critical and for which no mitigation path could be mutually agreed. Making a change in the venue/partner at this point in the process would not be desirable for either party. However, it would be possible and could be required.

Termination at this stage would mean that each party bears its own costs.

Phase Four: Pre-Congress planning and contract development

13. Finalise Responsibility Matrix

IWA, through its Board of Directors and its delegate, the Executive Director, has overall responsibility for the conduct of the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition in 2027. Within that context, the organisational responsibilities of the parties can broadly be divided as follows:

- IWA is responsible for and has final authority over the overall branding, project management, scientific and technical programme, the exhibition and international sponsors This includes:
 - Issuing calls for content and developing the programme of Technical Sessions, Workshops, Strategic Forums and Business Forums
 - Promoting and marketing of the 2027 WDCE regionally and internationally
 - Securing sponsorship from international sources;
 - Facilitating exhibition sales to international stakeholders;
 - Liaising with the Governments internationally and other key international stakeholders;
 - Facilitating opportunities for regional and international water sector to participate in the 2027 WDCE through papers, workshops and side events, including pre and post Congress workshops.

- The Local Partner provides advice for local arrangements and suggestions for issues of local interest considered in other aspects of the 2027 WDCE. Roles for the local partner will typically include:
 - Promoting and marketing of the 2027 WDCE locally and regionally;
 - Securing sponsorship from local sources;
 - Facilitating exhibition sales to local stakeholders;
 - Liaising with the local Government and other key stakeholders;
 - Making suggestions and recommendation for technical site tours;
 - Evaluating and recommending social events and related venues;
 - Facilitating opportunities for the local and regional water sector to participate in the 2027 WDCE through papers, workshops and side events, including pre and post Congress workshops or the like in the region;

There will be many areas where collaboration and joint efforts will be required between IWA and the local partner, especially in co-operating on Sponsor and Exhibitor sales.

14. Establishment of the Joint Organising Committee

The WDCE Joint Organising Committee is typically comprised of between 4 and 6 people and includes the Congress Director from IWA Secretariat, and other individuals key to the oversight and management of the Congress.

15. Develop and Formally Agree on the Final Budget

The Congress budget is divided into three enterprises: conference, exhibition and sponsorship, with separation of finances between each.

16. Develop Necessary Contracts

The principal contracts to be negotiated are:

- The Framework Agreement with the local partner;
- The DMC (destination management company) contract between the DMC, local partner and IWA; and
- The contract with the venue.

C. Time Line

26 February 2026	Call for Expression of Interest
06 April 2026	Receipt of Expressions of Interest
20 April 2026	Call for Full Proposal
14 June 2026	Receipt of Full Proposals
29 June 2026	Shortlisting of (max 3) Candidates
13 Jul – 08 Aug 2026:	Site Visit of Short-Listed Venues
30 August 2026	Receipt of Best and Final Proposals
16 October 2026	Notification of Preferred Candidate
27 November 2026	Framework agreement negotiated and signed

D. Key Selection Criteria

The following are ten key criteria against which all proposals to host the WDCE will be evaluated. The criteria are listed together with explanatory notes. Also included are advisory notes to guide local partner responses.

Restating what has been said elsewhere, the WDCE is not just a conference, it is one of IWA's main meetings to bring together members and partners around issues of relevance for lower- and middle-income countries. The WDCE must deliver a high quality delegate experience that supports membership engagement and long-term participation. Delegates must enjoy the overall experience - strong technical quality, good social programme, interesting city/country, friendly welcoming atmosphere, efficient organisation, a feeling of good value for money.

The successful venue will be that which, on balance, best satisfies the majority of the different requirements set out below.

1 Capacity to Organise the Conference

- a. Strong local partner and organisation committee with good organisational resources.
- b. Previous experience of large international conferences.
- c. Support of all sections of the water industry in the country - utilities, manufacturers/suppliers, government, research/academic, consultants in both the water supply and wastewater sector.
- d. Good financial sponsorship prospects.

Note: The Congress is a large, complex event. There will be 1,000 – 1,500 delegates, 100 - 200 exhibition staff and 1,000- 1,500 visitors to the exhibition. The event comprises:

- conference with high level plenary keynotes and panels, agenda setting leadership forums and/or summits, 8 parallel sessions, 160 scientific presentations, 40 workshops, over 8 panel discussions, half-day and one-day visits to technical installations, and over 100 scientific posters on display;
- exhibition/trade show of 500 - 700 square meters of space sold;
- social programme for pre- and post-conference technical and tourist tours.

The local partner plus the city's and country's support infrastructure (the local water industry, professional conference organisers, hotels, transportation, restaurants, travel and hotel booking agents, tourist industry must all be adequate to cope successfully).

Advice: Local partners should state how they meet criteria (a) to (d) above including what sponsorship, in cash or in kind (e.g., sponsorship of reception or part of conference dinner) they can provide for the WDCE. Proposers should identify PCO/DMC firms with demonstrated experience of large international events and must provide documentary evidence of such experience.

2 Strong Support from local Delegates

A minimum of 400 delegates from the host country or from the host country plus immediately adjacent countries is essential.

Notes: IWA rotates WDCE venues to different continents to allow maximum opportunity for water professionals from around the world to attend. IWA gives preference to geographical diversity in venue selection; however, final selection remains at the discretion of the Board. If very few local delegates are able to attend, for whatever reason, this limits the effectiveness of hosting the WDCE there.

Advice: Local partners must provide convincing evidence that 300 plus local delegates will attend, e.g., statistics from comparable previous events. If this would involve a lower local registration fee then this must be stated together with the level of local fee in Euros.

3 Attraction of the Venue to Overseas Delegates

The venue should be attractive to both overseas and local delegates and accompanying persons. Proposers must provide independent evidence demonstrating the attractiveness and international conference standing of the proposed venue city.

Notes: IWA seeks maximum delegate attendance at the WDCE for reasons of attracting as many participants and members as possible to get together (many overseas delegates are members), to maximise the cost effectiveness of the event and to maximise its impact in sharing expertise with as many professionals as possible worldwide.

Advice: If the proposed venue is a popular conference city the local partner should provide independent evidence of this. If not, then the local partner should set out convincing advantages of the proposed city as a visitor destination.

4 High Quality Convention/Exhibition Centre

Complex events like the IWA WDCE need a large, flexible, purpose-built convention centre, which is conveniently located to hotels, shopping facilities and restaurants. The following are IWA's basic requirements of the convention/exhibition centre:

- a. Auditorium for Opening, Closing Ceremony and Plenary Keynote Sessions –preferably 800 pax and above.
- b. Sufficient break-out rooms for 8 parallel oral presentation sessions. Minimum recommended capacity 100 Pax theatre style for each room, and at least 3 rooms with 120 or more Pax in banquet (round tables) style.
- c. Adequate space to display simultaneously over 100 scientific posters, with sufficient space to move around and view the posters.

- d. A minimum of 3 smaller meeting rooms minimum 30 Pax theatre style, 20 Pax boardroom style.
- e. Rooms and equipment for author slides and power point presentation preparation, adequate for a 6 parallel session conference.
- f. Secretariat and Committee meeting rooms.
- g. Simultaneous translation facilities (for local delegates if required).
- h. Exhibition/trade show space – 3,000 m² gross space for 700 m² space sold with all normal exhibition services and good access for exhibitors' goods. It is a good idea to have coffee, lunch facilities, etc in the trade show area to help maximise visitor attendance.
- i. Easy access to convention centre from hotels, by walking, metro or subway, tramcar system etc. If this is not possible then a shuttle bus service may be required and this should be indicated.

Advice: The local partner should provide data to answer the above requirements, including a location map of the convention centre and a map of it in relation to the city centre, airport and probable main hotels and guest houses, etc. If shuttle bus transportation is needed, an outline plan (e.g., number of buses, timings) is requested. If the convention centre is not big enough, please indicate how a combination of facilities in nearby hotels could meet the requirements.

5 No Entry Barriers to Bona Fide Delegates

IWA requires that visa processes for bona fide delegates are transparent, reasonably accessible and not subject to discriminatory or arbitrary restriction. Local partners must demonstrate willingness and capacity to support visa facilitation processes (e.g., liaison letters, government engagement where appropriate).

Advice: Local partner must provide a general statement of visa requirements plus a list of any countries for which special visa requirements apply and what these are.

6 Overall Affordability for Delegates

The WDCE should be affordable to delegates from a wide range of economic backgrounds.

Note: WDCE attendance costs include air fare, registration fee, hotel, eating and general subsistence. For delegates from higher income countries, few venues will present a cost problem. For others, hotels, local transportation and eating costs may be a problem.

Advice: Local partners should provide indicative daily costs for a delegate attending including accommodation, meals, local transport and estimated registration fees.

7 Technical Facilities to Visit

WDCE delegates like to visit interesting technical installations and organisations (which should not involve long journeys) on half- and one-day visits. Ideally a wide range of interesting water installations should be available within reasonably short distance of the venue city.

Notes: The technical installations can include water and wastewater treatment plants, urban storm drainage and flood control installations, control centres, research facilities etc.

Advice: Proposers must list up to 6 potential technical visits including distance from the venue, accessibility, and operational relevance.

8 Venue Easily Accessible by Air from all Parts of World

Ideally the venue city will have an international airport with good connections to major cities worldwide. Failing this there should be good air connections between the main getaway airport in the host country and the venue city.

Advice: Proposers must provide details of international air connectivity, including major routes, frequency and typical travel times

9 Financial Contribution to IWA

The Congress is a substantial undertaking both logistically and financially. The local partner should demonstrate the extent of financial underwriting that will be available to support it until Congress revenues become available.

Further, IWA has set a target of:

- Covering its own internal costs as well as outgoings
- Recovering the cost of funds invested in the lead-up to the Congress

IWA will agree to a surplus share arrangement with the local partner that recognises the level of investment/risk undertaken by the partner.

Notes: Congress revenue sources include delegates' registration fees, exhibition income, and sponsorship (in cash or in kind).

Advice: Proposers must disclose all material financial, taxation and currency factors that may affect the event, including non-recoverable VAT, currency controls, and repatriation restrictions.

10 Site Visits and Inspections

Three key representatives from the IWA Secretariat will visit a potential venue city for 1-2 days. The intention is: to meet the Governing Member committee, likely Host Country Committee chair and any members of organising committee; view the convention centre (congress and exhibition areas) and make a very quick tour of the city to ascertain its connections to convention centre etc; view a selection of hotels from luxury to low cost; and discuss the Congress organisation with all interested parties.

Potential host cities are expected to cover the costs of travel and accommodation costs in visiting the venues of potential host cities. Every endeavour will be made to minimise these.

Advice: Proposers must propose potential site visit dates and provide a draft agenda for the visit.

E. Costings Required

In order to compare the various proposals, local partners are asked to provide the following indicative cost details (currency in £ GBP) inclusive of VAT. Please note that a budget template for you to provide the information below will be sent to you when the Call for Full Proposal is issued.

- a. Cost of hiring conference venue.
- b. Tea/coffee/lunch costs per delegate per conference week.
- c. Hire of audio-visual equipment and technicians.
- d. Hire of poster panels for scientific posters (200 units).
- e. Cost of Shell Scheme for Exhibition
- f. Temporary staff (hosts and security)
- g. Signs and decorations (banners, flowers, etc)
- h. Shuttle bus transportation to/from hotels/conference (if required).
- i. Typical hotel costs per night:
 - 5-star
 - 4-star
 - 3-star
 - Guest House/Hostel (e.g., student, hostel or similar)
- j. If convention centre is far from hotels, typical single journey cost of:
 - Public transport (e.g., metro, bus – state which)
 - Taxi

k. Value Added Tax/Sales Tax

- Is there a value added tax/sales tax in your country?
- If YES, would this apply to all goods and services provided in connection with the conference?
- If it would not apply to all goods and services, please say whether any goods and services would be liable to the tax and, if so, which.

Proposers must provide a clear statement of VAT applicability, recoverability and proposed management mechanisms.

l. Taxation 1 – are registration fees subject to tax (value added or sales tax) or not?

- if YES, at what percentage rate?
- if YES, is this tax recoverable?
- if YES, how?

m. Taxation 2 – would any financial surplus be liable to corporation (or similar) tax?

- if YES, at what rate?
- if YES, would IWA's non-profit status enable it to avoid or mitigate the tax payable?
- if YES, please state how?

n. Currency Restrictions

- Are there any restrictions on currency movements into and out of the country?
- if YES, please give details

o. Sponsorship income

- Estimated total cash
- Other sponsorship in kind, please give details
- Likely sources of sponsorship – please indicate in general

F. Instructions to Proposers

Proposal documents are required to follow the numbering and layout outlined in the selection criteria. (A template has **not** been prepared for this purpose – proposers should prepare their own document.)

Proposers may submit additional supporting information relevant to the evaluation criteria; however, evaluation will be based primarily on the specified requirements. Note: Proposers must either be a Governing Member of IWA in good standing or be an organisation able to demonstrate a formal relationship, recognised collaboration, or substantial prior engagement with IWA or the international water sector consistent with IWA's objectives.

1. Read the Guidelines for Venue Proposal. This document incorporates the Key Selection Criteria.
2. Your Proposal should follow the numbering and layout outlined in the Key Selection Criteria and Costings Required.
3. Complete and sign the attached Warranty and Undertaking.
4. Documents should comprise:
 - One electronic copy
5. All correspondence and any questions of clarification should be sent to:

Mr Kizito Masinde
Global Events and Awards Director
International Water Association
Export Building, First Floor, 1 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 20 7654 5500
Email: Kizito.masinde@iwahq.org

Proposers are encouraged to provide any additional data or information that will assist IWA in making its decision.

G. Warranty and Undertaking

To Mr Kizito Masinde
Global Events and Awards Director
International Water Association

Export Building, First Floor
1 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BA,
United Kingdom

(IWA)

From _____

(Bidder)

In consideration of IWA considering our proposal to host the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition, the Proposer hereby warrants and agrees that:

1. The contents of the Proposal are true and correct in all material respects.
2. There are no other facts or matters that might reasonably be required by IWA that would materially affect a decision by IWA.
3. Submission of a proposal does not create a contractual relationship.
4. That IWA has absolute discretion in the decision on where to locate the WDCE and the WDCE may be awarded to a proposer other than on financial considerations or it may not be awarded to any proposer.
5. The Proposer will, if successful, sign a Preliminary Conference Framework Agreement in the form provided by IWA.

Signed for and on behalf of Proposer:

Signature _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Name _____

Position _____

Position _____

Date _____

Date _____