Guidelines on preparation of Preliminary Outline Proposal and Preliminary Budget for initial review and comment by the Events Coordination Committee (ECC) Convention Committee -

Conferences focus on a specific field of audio engineering. They serve to create a forum amongst professionals in that field and through these gatherings and the publication of their proceedings, contribute to the advance of international science and technology. Conferences are separate from other locally hosted events since, like Conventions, they require Peer Reviewed Papers as part of the event.

Training and Development (T&D) events are topic focused online and in-person educational and training and hands-on experiences.T&D Events include Summits, Symposia and Academies.

Before a full Proposal and Budget is submitted to the Events Coordination Committee for consideration, a Survey Monkey should be filled out which will be forwarded to the ECC Conference Committee Chair.

The principal purpose of this document is to assist with the development of that framework to ensure the conference is successful commercially as well as academically. The ECC, the Conference Committee Chair, and HQ staff will set up a phone call with the proposal submitter to discuss the proposal before moving onto the next step of the planning process.

Overview of Responsibilities

The organising committee is responsible for initiating the proposal including the topic, suggested location, approximate date, potential sponsors, Chairs, including Event Chair(s) and Papers Chair(s). Other Chairs can be suggested in the initial proposal or added later as needed (including Lodgings, Food & Beverage, Facilities, Logistics, etc.).

The Conference Chair will work closely with the organising committee to ensure the proposed event will meet or exceed the criteria for a successful event, and act as a liaison with the ECC as needed.

The ECC will oversee the process and make the final decision regarding the viability of the event.

AES HQ will aid in all areas including web presence, promotions, collection of fees, etc. HQ will also negotiate and enter contracts with venues, hotels, caterers, and all providers.

Note: HQ is the only entity empowered to enter contracts or financial agreements of any type with any entity during this process, including but not limited to venues, hotels, caterers, suppliers, and vendors.

Key items for inclusion in Outline Proposal

Topic area and suggested title
Identifying the topic area(s) a conference will cover is the essential starting point, and it is assumed this will have been researched thoroughly before even a preliminary outline proposal is submitted for consideration. There should be enough academic and/or commercial research activity in the chosen topic area to ensure there will be a sufficient number of papers submissions to fill the program. All AES conferences have the same title format: [Year] AES International Conference on [Topic].

Key members of the Organising Committee
At this stage it is not necessary to establish a full organising committee, however we would expect Conference Chair(s), Papers Chair(s), and Treasurer to be in place, with the first two roles filled by AES Members/Fellows who are acknowledged experts in the conference's topic area(s). AES International Conferences are high-profile events which reflect the leading role the Society plays in audio-related research. Other roles can be filled by any Member, Fellow, or Associate Member in good standing, or Student Member in some instances. Where there are to be Conference Co-Chairs, one of those might also double as Treasurer.

If possible, any student volunteers working on the conference should be AES Student Members.

All positions within the Organising Committee are voluntary. No remuneration is offered, although reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of committee members' duties will be reimbursed provided they have been approved by the Committee's Treasurer in advance. **No member of the Organising Committee is authorised to sign any contract, including those with third-parties providing paid-for services such as marketing, publicity or web/graphic design, without consulting AES HQ. Normally such services will be provided by the AES staff or our approved contractors, and entering contracts is the exclusive remit of HQ**.

Key members of the committee may include (but are not limited to):
Conference Chair/Co-Chairs (max 2)
Papers Chair(s) (max 2)
Workshops Chair(s)
Treasurer
Facilities/Logistics Chairs
Sponsors Chair
Volunteers Chair

Suggested dates for the conference
Conferences should be proposed and planned at least 12 months in advance, preferably 18-24 months. Before deciding on dates, please check conflicts including other audio-related events, including AES conventions and conferences, widely observed public and religious holidays, particularly those in the region where the conference is to be held. Local festivals, and major sports and other events likely to draw large crowds should be considered because they can have an impact on the availability and price of hotels and venues. AES HQ can help when considering dates.

Location and venue
This choice will often be decided by the country, city and/or academic establishment where the Conference is proposed and the geographic location of the key committee members. Ultimately, the ECC Conference Committee Chair and HQ staff will help vet suggested locations/venues, and HQ staff will lead the negotiation and contracting processes if applicable. While it is not always possible it is always preferred to host events at a university or facility that can donate, sponsor, or subsidise the space.

Number of participants anticipated
It is always difficult to assess potential attendance. Where possible it should be based on prior experience with similar events, such as previous AES Conferences or other organisations' conferences on the same or similar topics.

Participant fees
Pricing will vary considerably between different industry segments. When proposing fee levels the cost of other conferences in the same or similar fields should be taken into account. That said, fees must also reflect the actual cost of staging the conference. Guidance on calculating fees is provided in the Budget section below.

Sponsorships
Industry support is an essential element for the financial success of a conference. As a general rule, it should not be relied upon to make up any shortfall resulting from an incorrect determination of the participant fees due to underestimating the costs. In other words, sponsorship income should be used to enable extra-curricular activities such as social gatherings and any giveaways such as participant bags, not to fund the core activities of the conference.

Key Items for inclusion in Preliminary Budget

Please use *this spreadsheet* to propose a budget for the event (or request a copy from the ECC Conference Committee Chair).

Setting registration fees
Determining the optimum fee structure for a conference is far from straightforward; it involves not only comparisons with similar events but also careful analysis of all the anticipated costs. These costs fall into two primary categories:

- Fixed costs: the venue, audio-visual facilities, and any expenses incurred by the conference committee and invited speakers. These will not vary regardless of the number of attendees.
- Variable costs: these are determined directly by the number of participants and include lunches and coffees. The number of free passes that are issued will impact this category since each one of those free passes will need to be covered by paying participants. It is important this is kept in mind when calculating the budget.

Registration fees will vary according to the market sector, however we believe there should be at least a minimum ratio between the fees charged and the costs involved, and also between the various categories of participant, e.g. AES member, author, student.

Organising an International Conference requires a significant amount of work, not only by the volunteer Conference Committee but also our HQ staff. To ensure this overhead is

covered we expect a conference to achieve a surplus of 25% after all costs – e.g. $80,000 income less ≤$60,000 cost = ≥$20,000 surplus. Some conferences may have smaller target audiences and thereby lower income, but in all cases we require a minimum surplus of $10,000 to cover our base costs.

The following example of a Preliminary Budget Form offers some guidance:
Estimated Costs
Initial estimate of venue, A/V and other fixed costs: $12,000
Initial estimate of food/beverage/other per-delegate: $150.00
Number of participants including all free passes: 120
Total fixed and variable costs for 120 participants: $30,000
Cost per participant: $250.00

Proposed fees for members [*These are minimums. Conferences targeting some industry sectors may justify higher fees.*]
Full participants: Cost x 2.0   ($500)
Students: Cost x 1.2, or 60% of full fee   ($300)
Authors: Cost x 1.5 or 75% of full fee   ($375)
Workshop Presenters   Cost x 1.0 or 50% of full fee   ($250)
Student Authors: Cost x 1.0 or 50% of full fee   ($250)

Keynote speakers and invited Authors qualify for a free pass (as do Conference Committee members and volunteers).
Typically there will be one keynote speaker. Their conference pass and lodgings will be covered. Any additional featured or invited speakers will qualify only for the conference pass. On a case-by-case basis the ECC may approve additional expenses for the keynote. Another sponsorship opportunity would be for a sponsor to pay any additional expenses for a keynote speaker or featured/invited speakers.
Presenters who only attend for the day of their presentation rather than the entire Conference may be offered a free day pass at the discretion of the Conference Committee.

Note 1. If the conference is to be held outside the U.S. the majority of costs will be incurred in the local currency. These should be converted into US Dollars at the prevailing exchange rate. All fees for participants and sponsors are set in US Dollars irrespective of where the conference is to be held.

Note 2. The choice of venue has a major impact on the cost of a conference and therefore its profitability. Using a conference venue or hotel not only incurs charges for meeting rooms and catering, but frequently the requirement to use in-house A/V, with service charges and tax being added on top. The ideal location for an AES conference is an academic or other institution where the meeting space is either donated or provided at a subsidised price. While we still need to pay for catering, and possibly some A/V equipment and facilities for sponsors, the charges for these are usually lower. This means we can either reduce registration fees, increase profitability, or ideally a combination of both.

Note 3. Venue and catering prices tend to increase annually. Try to get estimates based on the proposed conference dates, or at least an idea of the expected increase for that year – then add 10% because everything will cost more than you anticipated!

Non-members add $125 ($50 for students) to their fee which applies to membership and allows them access to the Conference proceedings posted on the AES E-Library, as such:

Non-member pricing (based on fees as stated above):
Full participants: Fee + $125   ($625)
Student participants: Fee + $50   ($350)
Authors: Fee + $125   ($500)
Student Authors: Fee + $50   ($300)
Workshop Presenters: Fee + $125   ($375)

Non-members will be members for one year based on the additional fee, which will give them access to the Conference proceedings on the AES website. These funds should not be reflected as a credit in your budget, since the additional fees are credited to Membership.

Sponsorships, tiers and fees
Sponsorships are a crucial element of an International Conference's income. While participant fees must be sufficient to cover all costs associated with the conference itself including meeting room hire, A/V, catering, etc. with a 25% margin, sponsorship income is important to cover any social activities, ancillary catering, and, wherever possible, provide additional income from the event.

The accepted practice is to divide sponsorship into 'tiers', typically Platinum, Gold and Silver. Sometimes a basic Bronze level is offered, and where sponsorship from large corporations is available a top-tier Emerald category may be added. All tiers apart from Bronze will be credited on the conference pages on the AES website and in promotional materials. Bronze sponsors will only be acknowledged at the conference itself.

The amount charged for each tier is likely to be dependent on the market which the conference serves. Where there are commercial operators the fees can be higher, for largely academic events they will be lower. There are guidelines as to what should be provided for each tier:

- Silver – Fees should be in the $2,000 to $5,000 range: One complimentary registration, logo on conference welcome slide, brochure or other insert in participant bag.

- Gold – Fees between $4,000 and $6,000: As Silver plus one additional registration (total 2), table top for display (table supplied) with space for a roll-up banner behind (not provided).

- Platinum (normally the top tier, although see Emerald below) – Fees between $5,000 and $7,500: As Gold plus one additional registration (total 3), option for 'Platinum Talk' (if appropriate).

- Emerald (where appropriate) – A premium tier which should carry a minimum fee of $10,000 and include: Up to 4 registrations, separate demo room or larger area in the main room, option for 'Emerald Talk' (if appropriate).

- Bronze (if offered) – Fee usually $1,000 - $2000 to include logo on conference welcome slide and brochure or other insert in participant bag only. No registrations included, any company representatives must register and pay to attend.

The offerings may be adjusted to suit the individual needs of the conference sponsors but the basic guidelines above should be adhered to wherever possible.

For conferences held in Europe it is crucial that the word 'Exhibition' is never used to describe the sponsors' demonstration area. Doing so could have serious implications in terms of VAT liability.

Sponsorships may also be offered for specific aspects of the conference such as a social event. In this instance the tier should be set in line with the value of the contribution, using the pricing guidelines above.

Representatives of sponsoring organisations who are not eligible for a free pass may register at Member rate without being required to pay the additional fee to join the AES (although they will need to do so if they want to access the conference proceedings in the E-Library).

No sponsorship offering should carry any guarantee of a speaking opportunity as part of the academic program. However, as an alternative, the top-tier Platinum sponsors (and/or Emerald where included) may be offered a 15-20 minute sponsored session as part of their package – for example, a 'Platinum Talk'. The fact these are promotional should be made obvious to participants and content can therefore be of a more commercial nature, although it should still be informative and relevant to the overall theme of the conference. The talks can be grouped into a single session or a series of sessions to suit the scheduling, but they must be clearly delineated as separate from the main conference program.

Social events
The participant fee calculations do not take into account any social events. (These gatherings provide participants and sponsors with an extremely valuable networking opportunity, and are encouraged.) In order to keep costs under control we strongly discourage dinners or other social events paid for through the event budget.

The cost of a dinner or other peripheral social activity can either be covered directly by a sponsor, by sponsorship income included in the registration fee, or a separate (optional) registration.

- Where the cost will be covered by sponsorship income the aim should be to achieve at least the same minimum 25% surplus as for the conference itself.

- A separate registration fee is a useful alternative when places for a social activity are limited to a number which may be lower than the anticipated number of registered delegates, for example a sit-down meal at a restaurant or other venue with a finite capacity. This separate fee should be set at a figure which takes into account the overall cost per person, including transportation, gratuities and other service fees, as well as covering any free places being offered to VIPs. Whether the organising committee chooses to pay for themselves or not is at their discretion (it

does of course have an impact on the cost for paying participants) but in order to keep the ticket price at a reasonable level it may not always be possible to offer free places to student volunteers or other *ad hoc* helpers. With this option we do not expect a 25% surplus, however we still recommend allowing a margin of at least 10% to cover contingencies.

Submission of the Outline Proposal with the Preliminary Budget

The preliminary budget will be reviewed by the Conference Chair, the ECC Chairs, and AES HQ staff in the context of the Survey Monkey submitted earlier in the process. Potential issues which may be identified at this stage include a clash with the dates or subject matter of another planned event, or any aspects of the proposal which could have an impact on the success of the conference. Up to one month should be allowed for this review. During this time the Conference Chair may come back with questions or requests for clarification regarding aspects of the proposal and budget.

Once the review is completed, and assuming all is OK, the ECC Conference Chair will give the go-ahead for a full Proposal and Budget to be submitted to the full ECC Conference Committee. If there are no objections from the committee the proposal will be sent to the ECC Chairs who, upon approval, will ask the AES Board of Governors to approve the conference.

USEFUL LINKS:

Survey Monkey for initial proposal

After initial proposal:
(Coming soon)
Conference Budget Template
Examples of other Conference Proposals

The following section defines and describes the different types of AES events and flowchart of the submission and approval process. All start with the submission of a Survey Monkey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AESeventidea

Training and Development
Training and Development (T&D) events consist of themed/topic focused events without peer reviewed papers. These will contain commercial slanted presentations for solutions and applications. T&D events fall into the following categories:

Academy
Events that are managed by AES HQ, in collaboration with volunteers. They focus on a topic area and have a hands-on training component, and may include an anchor masterclass. Academies have a commercial element.

Industry Summit
Industry Summits are commercial in nature and are organised through a strong collaboration with the industry. The events are managed by AES HQ, in collaboration with volunteers. The technology presentations and solutions are given by companies.

Symposium
Symposia are events focused on a topic area, where participants gather to exchange ideas, similar to a conference, but where there are no publications that are generated for the AES E-library. These are volunteer-led events. Sponsorship is organised in coordination with AES HQ.

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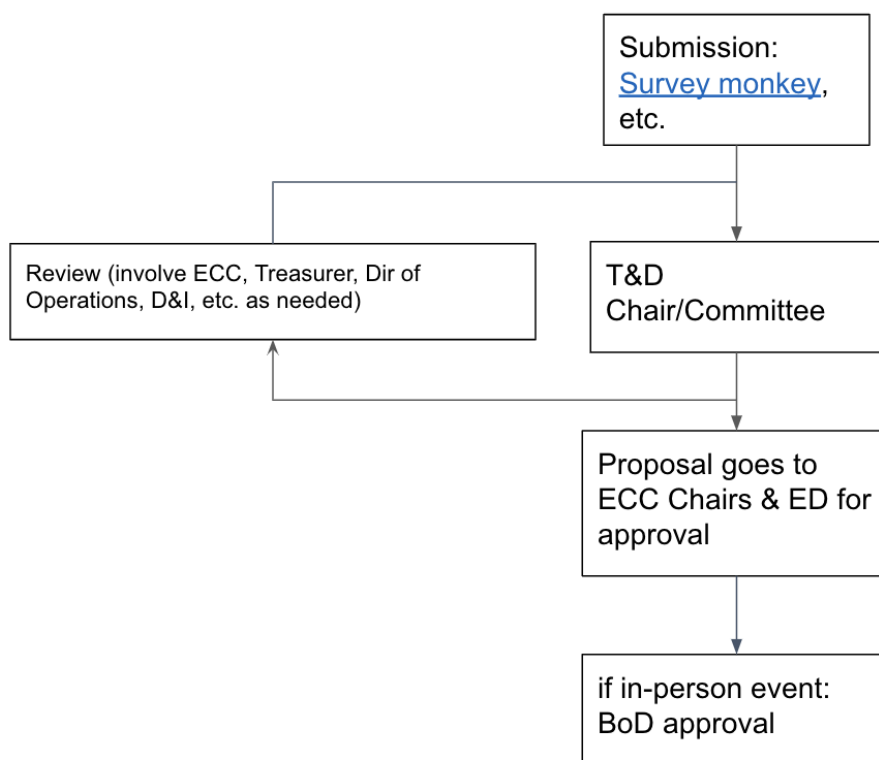
Conferences

Conferences are events focused on a topic area where peer-reviewed papers with an academic and scientific focus are required. These events are led by volunteers, in collaboration with AES HQ. Papers will be published in the E-library. Sponsorship is organised in coordination with AES HQ. Supporting partners and table tops are recommended. Conferences require a process of budgeting, proposals and review/approval.

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