

Justification Toolkit

General Tips

Many travel and training budgets have been slashed, and some organizations are experiencing severe financial problems. Thus, regardless of the merits of a conference, you'll probably need to justify the expense. Here are some things you might want to consider:

- ◆ Focus on what you will specifically bring back to the organization as return for the investment.
- ◆ Offer to prepare and deliver a short presentation and Q&A to your colleagues to share what you learned. That way, others in your unit will benefit from your attendance, as well.
- ◆ If you are working to obtain or maintain your CEUs or PDHs, remind your supervisor that this is a great way to earn several CEUs/PDHs and is less expensive than registering for separate conferences. It also requires less time away from the office.
- ◆ Be ready with a plan that shows who will cover for you while you are attending the conference.
- ◆ Be sure to check out the registration page where you can choose from a variety of options to tailor the conference to fit your specific needs.
- ◆ Register early to receive lowest registration rates.

Think **water**. Think **AWWA**.

Expenses Worksheet

Conference expenses are affected by a number of factors. Before you can even begin to justify your expenses, you need to calculate what those expenses are. Use the worksheet below to develop a cost estimate for attending ACE12. Refer to the registration and hotel information and forms online or in the conference announcement for details.

Expense	Guideline	Cost
Conference Registration	Full Conference (best value)	\$
Sunday Workshop	Optional—Additional Fee—Targeted content	\$
Ticketed Events	Optional—Facility Tours, Water Industry Luncheon, President's Reception	\$
Certificate Program	Optional—Public Officials only	\$
Flight	Try an online travel service to get a quick estimate.	\$
Lodging	Refer to ACE12 housing options.	\$
Transportation: Airport to Hotel	Taxi, shuttle, rental car, etc.	\$
Transportation: Hotel to Airport	Taxi, shuttle, rental car, etc.	\$
Mileage Reimbursement	Driving to conference or to the airport for your flight? Use an online mapping tool to calculate distances, then multiply miles by 55.5 cents/mile. (IRS standard for 2012)	\$
Parking Reimbursement	Airport parking for flight departure, or at hotel where conference is located.	\$
Food Per Diem	Check on your organization's policies.	\$
Total		\$

Understanding the Benefits

In these tough economic times, conference attendance can be difficult to quantify. For example, experts agree that one of the leading benefits of attending ACE12 is the networking value. Connect with colleagues in the water community. Where else can you find so many water industry contacts facing the same issues as your organization? There may be solutions you are not yet aware of.

When you propose ACE12 for approval, one of the more challenging justifications to quantify may be the actual knowledge and experience you will gain. Focus specifically on the fact that by personally attending the conference, you can return with first-hand, detailed information that you will then be able to convey and share with your organization.

Some specific details you'll need to identify:

- ◆ **Session content.** What sessions have particular relevance to your organization's work?
- ◆ **Vendor contacts.** Will ACE12 showcase exhibitors with tools you use or are evaluating for future use? Is this an opportunity to compare competing products or equipment?
- ◆ You will see the latest and greatest in the industry!
- ◆ **Best practices.** Spotlight all the pertinent training sessions from which your group will immediately benefit.
- ◆ **Training.** Emphasize relevant workshops designed to teach specific skills that will assist you and your team to overcome current or future challenges.

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Benefits Worksheet

Although you might understand the benefits of attending ACE, your manager may not. To be most effective in justifying the conference, you need to clearly articulate the connection between your organization’s knowledge requirements and the conference program. **DO NOT** assume your manager will be able to automatically make those distinctions.

To support this process, use the worksheet below to help you focus on the benefits. Use whatever makes sense for your particular situation and organization and omit the rest.

Your Organization’s Benefits	Specific Needs and the Conference Sessions & Training That Meet the Needs
Networking Benefits	ACE12 will allow [specific team members] to network with other professionals and vendors in the industry. We will be able to take the pulse of what is happening for tools, technologies, and processes and hear ideas we weren’t aware of.
Team Building (if sending a big part of your group)	This conference will help build our team, providing a forum for team members to discuss tools, technologies, and processes and how we might apply them in our company to improve our information, products, workflow, and processes.
Current Tools	
Future Tools Exploration	
Current Technologies	
Future Technologies Exploration	
Current Processes	
Future Processes Exploration	
Vendors With Tools & Technologies You Are Exploring	

How to Sell Your Attendance

After you have identified the specific educational advantages of attending the conference, provide both the expenses and benefits for your manager to realize and approve the value of your proposition.

Sell your conference proposition! *These sample letters are also available in Word format.*

Sample Letter 1—Basic

Letter to Manager

< Date >

Dear < supervisor's name >,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition, ACE12, being held in Dallas, Texas, June 10–14, 2012. The conference will enable me to attend a number of professional sessions directly applicable to my work and will allow me to network with a variety of water industry experts and colleagues from around the world. Many of their presentations are tailored to the < your specific profession > water professional and give information on how to < list benefits to your responsibilities >.

After reviewing the ACE12 brochure, I have identified a number of professional sessions that will allow me to gain knowledge and understanding about how we can improve our operations. The presentations are all facilitated by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to advance my skills, improve efficiency in my position, and transfer knowledge back to my team. By attending, I can translate our agency's challenges in solutions that can help < organization's name > reduce costs and continue to provide safe water for our city/county.

<INSERT A SAMPLE SELECTION OF SESSIONS YOU WANT TO ATTEND>

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

Conference Fee:	<\$xxxx>
Roundtrip Airfare:	<\$xxxx>
Transportation:	<\$xxxx>
Hotel:	<\$xxxx>
Meals:	<\$xxxx>

The total estimated cost associated with attending this conference is <\$xxxx> (if registered before March 16, 2012).

Again, the opportunity for me to develop better contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas of the water industry makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE12 a wise investment that will yield rich dividends for < organization's name >. You may view the conference agenda at www.awwa.org/ACE12. I look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,

< your name >

Sample Letter 2—Best Value

Letter to Manager

< Date >

Dear < supervisor's name >,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition, ACE12, being held in Dallas, Texas, June 10–14, 2012. The conference will enable me to attend a number of professional sessions directly applicable to my work and will allow me to network with a variety of water industry experts and colleagues from around the world. Many of their presentations are tailored to the < your specific profession > water professional and give information on how to < list benefits to your responsibilities >.

After reviewing the ACE12 brochure, I have identified a number of professional sessions that will allow me to gain knowledge and understanding about how we can improve our operations. The presentations are all facilitated by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to advance my skills, improve efficiency in my position, and transfer knowledge back to my team. By attending, I can translate our agency's challenges in solutions that can help < organization's name > reduce costs and continue to provide safe water for our city/county.

<INSERT A SAMPLE SELECTION OF SESSIONS YOU WANT TO ATTEND>

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

Full-conference with President's Reception: (member rate)	\$820
Roundtrip Airfare:	<\$xxxx>
Transportation:	<\$xxxx>
Hotel:	<\$xxxx>
Meals:	<\$xxxx>

The total estimated cost associated with attending this conference is <\$xxxx> (if registered before March 16, 2012). I can attend the entire professional program and devote time to networking, plus my registration fee includes access to **ACE Online**.

Again, the opportunity for me to develop better contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas of the water industry makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE12 a wise investment that will yield rich dividends for < organization's name >. You may view the conference agenda at www.awwa.org/ACE12. I look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,

< your name >

Sample Letter 3—One Day

Letter to Manager

< Date >

Dear < supervisor's name > ,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition, ACE12, being held in Dallas, Texas, June 10–14, 2012. The conference will enable me to attend a number of professional sessions directly applicable to my work and will allow me to network with a variety of water industry experts and colleagues from around the world. Many of their presentations are tailored to the < your specific profession > water professional and give information on how to < list benefits to your responsibilities > .

After reviewing the ACE12 brochure, I have identified a number of professional sessions that will allow me to gain knowledge and understanding about how we can improve our operations. The presentations are all facilitated by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to advance my skills, improve efficiency in my position, and transfer knowledge back to my team. By attending, I can translate our agency's challenges in solutions that can help < organization's name > reduce costs and continue to provide safe water for our city/county.

<INSERT A SAMPLE SELECTION OF SESSIONS YOU WANT TO ATTEND>

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

One-day <insert day> : (member rate)	\$450
Roundtrip Airfare:	<\$xxxx>
Transportation:	<\$xxxx>
Hotel:	<\$xxxx>
Meals:	<\$xxxx>

The total estimated cost associated with attending this conference is <\$xxxx> (if registered before March 16, 2012). By attending ACE12 for one-day, I can participate in up to 17 professional sessions.

Again, the opportunity for me to develop better contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas of the water industry makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE12 a wise investment that will yield rich dividends for < organization's name > . You may view the conference agenda at www.awwa.org/ACE12. I look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,

< your name >