

HOSTING EMI CONFERENCES - GUIDELINES

Following questions from some committee members, the following note was prepared to briefly present how EMI typically plans and holds its conferences, the main features of the agreement between EMI and the institution hosting the EMI conference, and what needs to be included in a proposal to host a future EMI conference.

How does EMI hold its conferences?

EMI has been holding its conferences at universities in the U.S. and abroad, in partnership with the host institution. This format provides the campus atmosphere preferred by the members. By using the resources provided by the host institution (space, AV, food services, on-campus student housing, and existing relations with hotels and vendors), this approach keeps the registration fee and the overall cost of participation at a reasonable level.

What are the main features of the agreement between EMI and the host institution?

The agreement (memorandum of understanding, or m.o.u.) between EMI and the host institution specifies the responsibilities of the university partners hosting EMI conferences and those of EMI. They can be summarized as follows:

University

- Provide appropriate space and AV for presentation sessions, plenary sessions, keynote lectures, special functions, and committee meetings.
- Arrange for food and beverages during the conference and catering for special functions (e.g., welcome reception, awards banquet).
- Provide on-line and on-site registration.
- Create a website for on-line submission of abstracts (and if applicable, of papers), including notification of authors and assistance for constructing the conference program.
- Provide a table for EMI near the registration area or other high traffic location.
- Prepare a printed booklet for the conference program and have the conference program and abstracts available on smartphones or tablets through an app.
- Promote the conference to professional contacts and other mailing lists, mention in other organizations' newsletters and websites as appropriate.
- Prepare a tentative budget and propose a conference registration fee for different attendance numbers. (Note: the travel expenses, registration fees or honoraria for invited keynote speakers are considered as conference expenses to be covered by the conference income).

- Select the keynote/plenary speakers based on the guidelines provided for approval by the EMI Board of Governors.
- Collect all income and pay all expenses, including income derived from payment for registration, advertising, exhibits, and all other sources.
- Provide full disclosure and accounting of income and expenses within 90 days after the conference.
- Share the list of attendees with their contact information with EMI.
- Review of the abstracts, notification of the authors, and preparation of the conference program, including the keynotes/plenaries.
- Provide photos of the event.
- Provide the required staff support for the above.

EMI

- Create and maintain the conference website.
- Promote the conference to EMI members and other mailing lists as appropriate.
- Promote the EMI Conference through the EMI web site and newsletter, through communication with the EMI committees, ASCE channels (ASCE eNews, ASCE Global Link, ASCE Section Informant, ASCE SmartBrief, newsletters of other ASCE Institutes, ASCE Conference Calendar, etc.).
- EMI Board approves the list of keynote/plenary speakers and provides related guidance.
- Conduct a post-conference survey of the attendees, the results of which will be shared with the university.
- Create a photo gallery of the conference as appropriate.
- Provide the required staff support for the above.

Activities to be conducted jointly by EMI and the University

- Establish a schedule and a working budget.
- Set the registration fee for members, non-members, and students.
- Establish a plan for promoting and marketing the conference.
- Co-brand the conference by incorporating EMI and the university, logos and colors on approved promotional materials, website, program booklet, conference giveaways. Ensure that all images are shared early with EMI to maintain consistency across platforms.
- Maintain regular communication between the EMI staff, the University, staff engaged in the planning of the conference, and the Conference Steering Committee.

Financial arrangements between EMI and the host University can be flexible but should not create undue risk for either organization, including in the form of cancellation or attrition penalties imposed by the conference venue or by the hotels. The most common model is a memorandum of understanding, whereby the host University has all the responsibilities listed above for the University partner hosting EMI conferences, signs all contracts, collects the registration fees, pays all bills, is responsible for any cancellation penalties or attrition penalties, and guarantees a fixed amount of net income to EMI per registered attendee. The m.o.u. also includes a clause holding ASCE and EMI harmless. Due the COVID-19 pandemic, a cancellation clause and a force majeure clause are also included.

The actual planning of a specific event is a collaborative effort primarily involving the Local Organizing Committee, the Chair of the EMI Conferences Division, and EMI staff, with occasional input from the EMI Board of Governors. The process involves regular e-mail communications. All must keep in mind that the event is an EMI conference, not a conference of the institution hosting the event.

What should a proposal to host an EMI conference include?

The following information should be provided in a proposal to hold the conference:

- **Institution:** description; number of students; status (public, private); departments, faculties, laboratories, centers, and other research units likely to participate in, and contribute to the organization of the conference; number of research professors or researchers active in engineering mechanics, applied mechanics, civil engineering, and related fields; degree of support provided by the institution; other nearby institutions that could provide assistance in organizing the event, and could also be a source of attendees.
- **Facilities:** Spaces available for the various activities associated with a conference: plenary sessions, technical presentation sessions, meeting rooms, catering, reception, and banquet. Availability of Wi-Fi Internet access throughout the venue. A map and photos would be helpful.
- **Institutional experience in organizing scientific meetings.**
- **Transportation:** how to access the conference site (airport, railway station, public transport, parking, etc.). As EMI conferences typically have a substantial proportion of attendees from other countries, the proximity of the venue to the nearest major, international airport is an important criterion for the selection of the venue.
- **Accommodations:** Hotels and university campuses accessible to participants near the conference site; availability of dorm rooms for students.
- **Tourism possibilities in the vicinity.**
- **Steering committee:** list those who are EMI members, have attended previous EMI conferences, served on committees, or more generally have been actively engaged in EMI; previous experience in conference organization.
- **Plan for announcing and disseminating information** about the conference and promoting the conference (other scientific associations or groups, websites, newsletters, etc.).
- **Proposed dates:** Issues to be considered include academic vacation times and expected weather.
- **Schedule:** list the target dates envisaged for the main milestones (announcement, call for mini-symposia proposals, call for abstracts, notification of authors, cut-off dates for early and late registration and for hotel reservations, etc).
- **Grant opportunities** (possible sources).
- **Preliminary estimates of:** registration fees; the number of participants; and preliminary budget of the conference.
- **Other scientific meetings likely to compete** with the proposed event.

For questions or additional information, please contact EMI staff at emi@asce.org.