

ICA-SPONSORED REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Why regional conferences?

Conferences offer an effective and efficient way to facilitate intellectual discussion, foster collaboration, and socialize and train the next generation of researchers. ICA has a very robust annual conference that regularly draws a couple of thousand attendees. Unfortunately, due to scheduling, location, finances and/or the preliminary nature of their research, many scholars from around the world are unable to avail themselves of the annual conference. Against this backdrop, ICA has encouraged and sponsored *regional* conferences across the globe.

ICA sponsorship comes in the form of financial support (\$10,000 USD per regional conference for up to two conferences per year). These monies should be used especially for bringing in and accommodating ICA keynote speakers.

Besides internationally advancing the discipline, regional conferences play a key role in helping ICA's membership grow. ICA has held successful regional conferences around the world (e.g., South America, China, Africa). Because ICA is not very well-known in these places, regional conferences have bolstered ICA's visibility and attracted new members to the association who later present their research at the annual conference and submit to ICA journals.

Proposing and organizing regional conferences

This information below provides guidelines for individuals and/or organizations wishing to propose regional conferences to be sponsored by ICA. **Appendix 1 summarizes the important deadlines for the proposing and organizing of regional conferences.**

Submission of conference proposal

At least **18 months** before the planned date of the conference, the main organizer, preferably an ICA member, contacts the ICA President and the ICA Executive Director, with an expression of interest. In this correspondence, the organizer submits an official conference proposal that explains the rationale for organizing the conference and describes its theme in sufficient detail. Particularly important in this proposal is why this conference should be an ICA-sponsored conference. Examples of conference proposals can be found here [<http://www.icaheadq.org/conf/cosponsored.asp>].

Evaluation of conference proposal

Upon receipt of the conference proposal, the ICA President and ICA Executive Committee will evaluate it based on the following questions/criteria:

1. Does the proposal provide a convincing/compelling rationale for why ICA should sponsor the conference?
2. Is it likely that the conference (theme) will attract a number of regional and international participants?
3. Will the conference be held in a region where ICA is not yet very well known, thus increasing ICA's visibility?
4. What is the overall quality of the proposal (in terms of writing)?

At least **16 months** before the planned date of the conference, the president communicates the ICA's approval or rejection of the proposal.

Building the conference structure

After the ICA President and ICA Executive Committee have approved a specific proposal, the main organizer creates a structure consisting of different streams or areas of expertise (e.g., interpersonal

communication, health communication, philosophy of communication). Each stream is organized by two to three scholars with expertise in their respective streams. Preferably, at least one of them is an ICA member.

Once the conference structure is in place (at least **14 months** before the proposed conference dates), the main organizer discusses with the ICA President and ICA Executive Committee who might be invited as a keynote speaker(s). This/these speaker(s) must be (an) ICA member(s).

Based on this discussion, the main organizer develops a **detailed budget**, which must be communicated to the ICA president at least **13 months** before the planned date of the conference.

Upon receipt and review of the budget, the ICA President and Executive Committee work with the main organizer to finalize and approve the budget. This will take place at least **12 months** before the proposed conference dates. Subsequently, both the ICA President and main organizer send out a joint invitation to the potential speaker(s).

At least **11 months** before the planned date of the conference, the main organizer must have sent out a call for papers, which includes a description of the conference theme, descriptions of each stream, submission guidelines, etc. It is recommended that the organizers ask potential participants to submit **extended abstracts (1,000 – 2,000 words)** and/or **panel proposals**. Panel proposals should consist of a 500-word description and rationale of the panel and a 250-word description of each presentation on the panel. The call must state that this is an ICA-sponsored regional conference. However, both ICA members and non-ICA members are invited to submit extended abstracts and panel proposals. Interested parties do not need to become an ICA member in order to participate in an ICA regional conference. The call will be distributed via the ICA newsletter, listservs, personalized emails, and, if timing permits, at the annual ICA conference.

Stream organizers' task is to find **ten to fifteen paper readers** who may also function as panel chairs and/or respondents. Ideally, at least a third of these individuals should be ICA members. Once papers have been accepted, stream organizers develop the stream program, consisting of several panels.

At least **5 months** before the conference, the main organizer communicates acceptances and rejections to the submitters. The conference website should be fully live at the same time acceptances and rejections are communicated to authors. We recommend the website address various questions about conference logistics (e.g., travel, accommodations, security issues as needed). **For a list of the topics to be addressed, please see Appendix 2.**

At least **3 months** before, online registration begins. We recommend that the organizers propose two fees – one for early registration and another for late registration. If possible, we also recommend that the organizers propose a triple-tiered registration fees structure following the UN model for A, B, and C countries, based on the World Bank's indicators of Gross National Income. Residents of B-tier countries pay 75% of the A-tier price and residents of C-tier countries pay 50% of the A-tier price.

At least **1 month** before, online registration ends.

Onsite registration should be made available for a higher price.

Best practices for organizers

In envisioning the ideal regional conference, the series of best practices below will help individuals plan and organize these meetings.

Be truly regional.

It is important to understand these ICA regional conferences are meant to attract as many scholars as possible from a given region of the world. In other words, regional conferences should not target only scholars from a specific country, but also scholars coming from other neighboring countries. For instance,

when the ICA regional conference was organized in Brasilia, Brazil in 2013, many Latin American scholars came from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Mexico and Colombia.

But also be international.

Although regional conferences are designed to attract and bring together scholars and students from a given region of the world, they also are meant to establish connections between these individuals and scholars coming from other parts of the world. The Call for Papers therefore should also target scholars and students who would be interested in coming to your country to present their work.

Define a broad theme.

Since ICA wants to be as inclusive as possible, the regional conference theme should be as broad as possible. This means that organizers should not target scholars and students coming from a specific ICA division (e.g., organizational communication, political communication, communication technology or health communication). Rather, they should try to identify a theme that will be broad enough to attract representatives from several divisions. See [<http://www.icahdq.org/conf/cosponsored.asp>] for themes from recent regional conferences.

Mobilize as many universities as possible.

Given the scope of these regional conferences, it is critical to mobilize as many universities as possible for this event. In other words, organizers should try to get other universities to sponsor this event. ICA strongly recommends that organizers secure, from the outset, the support of major universities from your country or region. Such support comes in many forms – e.g., moral support, financial support, the provision of meeting space. Ideally, the Call for Papers should include not only the logo of the organizer's institution, but also the ones of other institutions and universities sponsoring this regional conference. This branding will help the regional conference attract as many scholars and students as possible.

Highlight ICA sponsorship.

Invite at least one representative of the current ICA Executive Committee or a past president of ICA, perhaps as a keynote speaker. This will help emphasize ICA's visibility and official sponsorship of the conference. As an ICA-sponsored regional conference, there needs to be official ICA presence, so these speakers will try to do everything they can to attend.

Appendix 1

Timetable

Number of months before the planned date of the conference	Tasks
At least 18 months before	The main organizer contacts the ICA president and the ICA Executive Director with an expression of interest. In this correspondence, the organizer submits an official conference proposal that explains the rationale for organizing the conference and describes its theme in sufficient detail.
At least 16 months before	The president communicates the ICA's approval or rejection of the proposal.
At least 14 months before	The main organizer discusses with the ICA President and Executive Committee (EC) who might be invited as ICA keynote speakers.
At least 13 months before	The main organizer must have communicated to ICA a detailed budget.
At least 12 months before	The ICA President and EC must have approved the budget.
At least 11 months before	The main organizer must have sent out a call for papers with a deadline for the submission of extended abstracts scheduled at least 6 months before the planned date of the conference.
At least 5 months before	Acceptance and rejections are communicated to the submitters. The conference website should be fully live at the same time acceptances and rejections are communicated to authors.
At least 3 months before	Online registration begins.
At least 1 month before	Online registration ends.

Appendix 2

Conference Website

The list below enumerates topics that the conference website should address *at minimum*.

The conference

1. The preliminary program
2. Conference fees
3. The conference venue

Logistics

1. Travel (to the city where the conference will be held; between the airport/train station to the hotel, as relevant; between place of accommodation and the conference venue)
2. Hotel and accommodations
3. Local transportation (as needed)
4. Security issues and precautions (as needed)
5. Options for local / regional travel (as needed)