



Specialty Conference Guidance:

How to Plan, Organize, and Conduct a Technically and Financially Successful A&WMA Specialty Conference



**AIR & WASTE MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION**

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I. Goals of this Specialty Conference Guidance Document

The Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA) sponsors a number of specialty conferences each year. Specialty conferences are typically two to three days in duration, and are either single or multiple tracks. Professional development courses and an exhibition of related products and services may be held in conjunction with specialty conferences.

The local Section/Chapter should assist with the development of a conference if interest exists. The development of the specialty conference technical program is the responsibility of the technical program chair, who is usually a member of one of the sponsoring Technical Council Technical Coordinating Committees (TCCs). The courses held in conjunction with the conference are handled directly by the Programs Coordinator from the Association's staff under the direction of the Specialty Conference Program Committee.

This Specialty Conference Guidance document serves the following purposes:

- Defines what Air & Waste Management Association specialty conferences or alternate programs are and outlines the process of proposing, planning, and conducting them.
- Provides an overview, instructions, and factors to consider when proposing a specialty conference and completing the Program Proposal form.
- Provides guidance to reviewers of the Program Proposal.
- Provides guidance to the specialty conference planners on planning and conducting the program including a general timeline.
- Outlines the roles of the specialty conference leadership, headquarters staff, Technical Council, Sections and Chapters, and Education Council in the program proposal, planning, and implementation process.
- Helps to improve the proposal, planning, and implementation of specialty conferences to ensure their technical and financial success.

This Guidance represents the collective experience and wisdom of A&WMA staff and membership leaders with extensive experience in planning specialty conferences and other technical programs. It also includes new elements suggested by a Board Task Force team to help to ensure more successful conferences, both technically and financially.

II. Definitions of a Specialty Conference and Alternate Programs

In addition to the Annual Conference and Exhibition (ACE), the Air & Waste Management Association typically puts on five general types of technical programs:

1. Conference
2. Congress
3. Seminar
4. Symposium
5. Workshop

Each of these types of programs is defined below.

Conference – A conference is a participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem-solving, and consultation. It is also an event used by any organization to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate, or give publicity to some area of opinion on a specific issue. No tradition, continuity, or periodicity is required to convene a conference. Although not generally limited in time, conferences are usually from two to four days in duration, depending on the specific objectives. Conferences are generally on a smaller scale than congresses.

An official A&WMA specialty conference is usually put on with the assistance of one or more Technical Coordinating Committees (TCCs) from Technical Council and involves a certain level of participation by A&WMA headquarters staff in planning, coordinating, and implementing hotel and other logistical considerations. Specialty conferences may be co-sponsored by other organizations.

Specialty conferences may be put on in conjunction with other A&WMA entities (such as Sections, Chapters, or Education Council) or with other organizations. The role of the headquarters staff in planning and logistics may vary widely for these other conferences. A&WMA entities interested in sponsoring a conference which differs from specialty conferences as described here should contact the Chair and Vice-chair of Technical Council to advise on the role they would like Technical Council to play. However, a Specialty Conference proposal form must be completed for these conferences.

Congress – A congress is the regular coming together of large groups of individuals, generally to discuss a particular subject. A congress will often last several days and has several simultaneous sessions. The length of time between congresses is usually established in advance of the implementation stage, and can be either annual or once every few years. Most international or world congresses are of the latter type while national congresses are more often held annually. A congress may also be a meeting of an association of delegates or representatives from constituent organizations. A congress is also the European term for convention. A&WMA participates regularly in the congresses of the International Union of Air Pollution Prevention and

Environmental Protection Associations (IUAPPA), which are held every three years, and is responsible for putting on the 15th IUAPPA World Clean Air Congress in Vancouver, BC, Canada, in 2010.

Seminar – A seminar is a meeting at which a small group of individuals with expertise in a particular area present the results of their work to educate others (and themselves) in the issues of importance in the area. The seminar is designed to promote intensive exchange and discussion of ideas, with a very strong educational component.

Symposium – A symposium is a meeting of a number of experts in a particular field, at which papers and/or presentations are given and discussed by specialists on particular subjects with a view to making recommendations concerning the problems under discussion.

Workshop – A workshop is a meeting of several persons for intensive discussion. The workshop concept has been developed to compensate for diverging views in a particular discipline or on a particular subject. A workshop allows for an informal and public session of free discussion organized to take place between formal plenary sessions or commissions of a congress or of a conference, either on a subject chosen by the participants themselves or else on a special problem suggested by the organizers. A workshop is also used to provide training sessions in which participants, often through exercises, develop skills and knowledge in a given field.

In many cases, elements of each of these types of programs may be included in a given technical program, regardless of what the program is called. In addition to specialty conferences and the alternate technical programs, there are other ways of conducting technical information exchanges and training. These include, but are not limited to, Webinars, online training courses, and training courses conducted at a variety of venues. These types of programs are usually conducted within A&WMA by the Education Council and will not be discussed in detail in this document. However, they should be considered as follow-ups or adjuncts to the types of programs listed above and included when planning the program.

III. Proposing a Specialty Conference

A Program Proposal Form has been created to help anyone with an idea for a specialty conference or alternate technical program to present his or her idea to A&WMA and to consider appropriate planning, timing, format, venue, financial, and other issues involved in implementing the program successfully. The Program Proposal Form is given as item SM01 in the Supplemental Material portion of this document and is also available on the A&WMA Web site at:

http://www.awma.org/events/events_resources.html

and

http://www.awma.org/about/tech_council/index.html

Anyone may submit an idea for a specialty conference or other technical program, but he/she will need to be a member of A&WMA International as he/she will need to have a major role on the program and/or general conference steering committees. He/she will be expected to work closely with the appropriate Technical Coordinating Committees (TCC) of Technical Council in the development of the specialty conference. He/she may, however, be designated as an official representative of a co-sponsoring organization. Leadership of the various TCCs is available on the A&WMA Web site at:

http://www.awma.org/about/tech_council/index.html

A. Deciding who the conference leadership will be: This is the most important decision that will be made by the submitters of a Specialty Conference program proposal. Accordingly, the leadership must be identified in the proposal. The Program Proposal must also identify the Technical Coordinating Committees who are sponsoring the Specialty Conference and identify the person from each TCC who will serve on the committees outlined below to assist in the development of the conference program. Proposals which contain a suitable (and possibly very timely) topic for a Specialty Conference but do not identify at least the main elements of the conference leadership will not be moved forward for approval. The individuals who have accepted the responsibility for overall oversight for development of the conference (Technical Program and General Program Chairs) must be identified. The responsibilities of these two individuals (they may be the same person) are:

- Technical Program Chair - This is the individual with responsibility for development of the technical program of the Specialty Conference. He/she must be familiar with the various scientific or policy topics to be covered by the conference. In addition, he/she should have had some prior experience with assisting in the organization of such conferences.
- General Program Chair - This is the individual with responsibility for the details of the local arrangements. He/she should be familiar with the local area and have a committee that includes local people. He/she would also work with the A&WMA staff (and with Section and Chapters Council where appropriate) in the development of marketing for the conference, the soliciting of sponsors and financial support for the conference, and the development of any planned exhibition.

If the Specialty Conference is to be co-sponsored by an A&WMA Section or Chapter, or by another association, these two committees should also include representatives of those entities.

B. Deciding what is the appropriate type of program: Specialty Conferences may contain five different elements:

- Platform or poster presentations submitted in response to the call for abstracts for the conference and solicited by the program committee.
- Panel discussions on specific topics of interest to the Specialty Conference. These are usually solicited by the program committee.
- Invited speakers, either keynote or plenary. These are usually arranged for by either the program or general conference committee.
- An exhibition presenting the latest equipment and technology related to the topic of the Specialty Conference. While the exhibition for the A&WMA Annual Conference is the responsibility of the A&WMA staff, an exhibition for a specialty conference requires more direct involvement and guidance by the program and general conference committee.
- Courses, usually a half or full day intensive coverage of a topic(s) related to the theme of the conference, typically held the day before the general sessions begin, and for which a fee is charged.

A conference may contain any or all of the above outlined elements. The decision on what emphasis is to be given to each of these elements need to be made before the Program Proposal is submitted because these decisions will guide the development of the Specialty Conference.

C. Deciding where and when to hold the program: A number of factors should be considered when deciding on the appropriate location and timing for a Specialty Conference:

- Length of time since the last related Specialty Conference.
- Development (or release) of the science or public policy related to the topic of the Specialty Conference.
- Location significant to the topic of the Specialty Conference.
- Location of governmental or other groups with specific interest in the topic of the Specialty Conference.
- Potential for conflict with similar conferences from other organizations, including Sections and Chapters.
- Suitability and cost of facilities for the Specialty Conference (A&WMA staff is experienced and skilled in helping to locate facilities and identify expected expenses in locations identified by the program and general conference committees).

D. Trying to avoid potential conflicts: The technical program and general conference committees are expected to include the individuals most familiar with other planned scientific conferences that may be in conflict with the topic of the Specialty Conference. A reasonable effort should be made to avoid such conflicts; this should include a web search. They

should also consult the A&WMA Web site for postings of related conferences planned by the various Section and Chapters of A&WMA:

http://www.awma.org/events/events_calendar.html?sort=1&typeid=9

It may be very desirable to work specifically with a Section or Chapter where there is an identified common interest in the topic of the Specialty Conference. Once a tentative location and date(s) are determined, the officers of the Section and/or Chapter in which the Specialty Conference is planned to be held must be contacted to make sure that there is no conflict with Section and/or Chapter programs.

E. Review of the Program Proposal by Technical Council: The Program Proposal form is submitted to the A&WMA Programs Manager and also to the Chair and Vice-chair of Technical Council. Contact information for these individuals is included on the Program Proposal form. Any additional information needed after the initial submission of the form will be requested by these individuals. The form will also be submitted by A&WMA, along with the Program Proposal Review Form (SM02) to the Chairs of the Education, and Section and Chapters Councils for their input. All of these activities will be done in a very timely manner so the planning by the Specialty Conference committees for the conference can move quickly forward. The A&WMA Programs Manager will prepare a financial plan for approval by both Technical Council and the Specialty Conference committees. This plan, and the review by the various Councils, is intended to ensure that the scope of the conference is well defined at the start of the process. Technical Council and A&WMA staff will then assist the Specialty Conference committees in the development of the conference as desired.

F. Coordination with Sections and Chapters Council and Education Council: As outlined in the section above, the initial program proposal will be reviewed by these Councils for any input they may have. If the conference is to include significant input from these Councils in the development of the Specialty Conference, that involvement will be mutually identified and the members of these Councils who will serve on the Specialty Conference committees identified. In addition, once a tentative venue and date(s) are determined, the officers of the Section and/or Chapter in the area where the Specialty Conference is to be held must be notified about the dates to make sure there will be no conflicts with any of their programs.

IV. Organizing and Conducting a Specialty Conference

A. Overview of the Process: While each specialty conference is unique with respect to the topics, format, and outline of the meeting, there are elements that are common to each. These are summarized in the following table. The times given for each activity are considered optimum, but may be shortened somewhat depending on the nature of the meeting. There is a detailed timeline included as SM03, which may be used for conference planning.

1. Specialty Conference Development Timeline

Time Prior to
Conference

Action Item

10-12 months	Specialty conference proposal form submitted for approval (recommend submitting Call for Abstracts as supplement). Prepare and advertise call for papers (appears in <i>Journal & EM</i> until abstract deadline has passed; posted on Web site, etc.). Hotel/venue search and finalization.
4-5 months	Abstract deadline Technical Program Committee Chair (TPC) assembles program; acceptance/rejection notifications sent.
3 ½ months	TPC submits preliminary program and other information to Headquarters (HQ).
3 months	Preliminary program agenda printed and mailed to prospects; posted on Web site.
1 ½ to 2 months	Manuscripts due for proceedings (If desired, proceedings may be published after the conference and the deadline for manuscripts moved to closer to the start of the conference. This decision should be made, however, at the start of the planning process.)
Ongoing	Program promotion
3 ½ weeks	TPC submits final program to HQ.
2 weeks	HQ posts final program on Web site and distributes to attendees. General Conference Chair (GCC) provides room monitor and registration assistance names to HQ (if applicable). Proceedings finalized.
2 weeks post	Preparation of proceedings begins (if not completed prior) Distribution of attendance list to attendees Post-meeting survey (electronic) Thank-you notes to session chairs/presenters

Staff Contacts

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(hotel, logistics)
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2. Roles of the Specialty Conference Leadership and A&WMA Staff

The Role of the Association Staff

The Association staff provides whatever assistance the program committee needs to bring together all of the necessary committees and coordinate their work. Headquarters staff has primary responsibility for:

- Ensuring that the proper approvals are received
- Budget preparation and monitoring
- Site selection (in consultation with the program chair/committee)
- Courses and scheduling; course instructors
- Exhibition management
- Publicity and promotion
- Registration (pre- and on-site)
- Proceedings publication

Registration fees are set by the Executive Director. Corporate sponsorship donations and/or government/agency grants in support of the conference should be submitted to the Association for inclusion in the conference budget.

The Role of the General Conference Chair

A General Conference Chair (GCC) may be appointed from the Local Section/Chapter to oversee aspects of the meeting with the exception of the technical program. A Vice Chair or a Co-chair may be appointed to assist the GCC. If the Technical Program Chair performs the activities of both the General Conference and Technical Program Chair, the title is Conference Chair.

- Venue Selection - A&WMA staff initiate a hotel search in the venue. Local assistance may be requested to conduct a site inspection prior to finalizing a contract with a facility.
- On-site Registration Assistance - Pre-registration and on-site registration is handled by headquarters staff; at times, local support is advisable to assist during peak registration hours.
- Room Monitors – It is advisable that a volunteer be assigned to each session room to dim lights, assist with the loading of presentations, and in general to ensure that the audiovisual equipment is functioning and the speakers are not having problems with the equipment. In exchange for monitoring a session a person will not be charged a registration fee for the session that is being monitored, and has the option to attend one additional session at no charge. Luncheon/meals are not included. Due to budgetary constraints, local agency personnel and students from local universities are ideal candidates for this function.
- Publicity/Promotion - Advertising the conference in A&WMA publications, news releases to technical and trade journals, and the bulk mailing of the preliminary program is handled by headquarters staff; however, there is still a need for local publicity with regard to early local

distribution of the program and interacting with local media personnel. Local support to identify additional promotional venues/ mailing lists is advisable.

Welcome to Conference; Luncheon Speakers; Ancillary Programs – Typically, the GCC selects and secures the person to open the conference (welcoming comments) and any luncheon speaker(s); the keynote speaker is chosen by the Technical Program Chair. Coordination and consultation in these areas is strongly recommended. Unless there are unusual circumstances, spouse programs, banquets, and tours are not recommended.

Gratis Registrations - Per the Association Board Policy, the General Conference Chair (or Conference Chair) has the option of granting up to five full registration fee waivers. The intent of the waivers is to provide an avenue for those who may not otherwise be able to participate or to recognize the level of time and effort put into the program development (technical program committee members, chair, etc.). It is recommended that these registrations be awarded in consultation with the Technical Program Chair.

The Role of the Technical Program Chair

Immediately following the approval by Association leadership of the specialty conference, the Technical Program Chair (TPC) should begin to assemble a technical program committee (preliminary work in this regard should have already occurred in the preparation of the program proposal). In addition, a Vice Chair may be appointed to assist the TPC. A&WMA continuing education staff will contact the TPC for suggestions regarding appropriate course selection.

Arranging and coordinating the technical portion of a specialty conference is the responsibility of the TPC. Working with the A&WMA staff, the TPC is responsible for the following:

1. Preparing a Call for Abstracts which must include the title, purpose of the conference, and the titles or themes of the sessions for which papers are being sought. The deadline for the receipt of abstracts and the length of abstract desired should be specified. The abstracts are to be submitted to the TPC. Abstract deadlines are generally 4-5 months prior to the conference. Electronic submittal of abstracts should be encouraged.
2. Participate in a planning conference call with staff to discuss program specifications (number of sessions, anticipated attendance, suggested venue), so that a hotel search can be initiated and a meeting venue identified. Determine if proceedings will be available onsite or post-meeting.
3. Recruit session chairs/co-chairs for each session to form a technical program committee. This committee solicits papers to supplement the papers obtained from the Call for Abstracts.

Please advise all participants in the conference program, including session chairs and speakers, that the policy of the Association requires everyone to pay a registration fee.

It is strongly advised that the Technical Program Committee have frequent conference calls to coordinate their activities. A&WMA staff can assist in arranging for these calls.

4. Review all abstracts with program committee. Assign abstracts to sessions and provide information to Association staff for the development of the preliminary program promotional piece. Staff will send notification letters of acceptance/rejection to all who have submitted abstracts. Staff will arrange for the layout, printing, and distribution of the preliminary program.

Headquarters will distribute presenter and session chair communications (preliminary program, Style Guide for proceedings paper format, and a letter of instruction) to each primary author and session chair. The first author listed is assumed to be the presenting author unless otherwise indicated. This communication will indicate that manuscripts should be submitted to Headquarters' staff by a specified date (usually one month prior to the meeting).

The TPC is responsible for obtaining the keynote speaker, who is not asked to pay the registration fee. The General Conference Chair (if applicable) is generally responsible for obtaining the luncheon speaker(s), also not responsible for a registration fee. Many GCCs and TPCs work together in obtaining keynote and luncheon speakers. (Note: not all programs utilize a keynote speaker and/or luncheon speakers).

5. Submit a final program outline to staff approximately two-and-a-half weeks prior to the conference (indicate any revisions to sessions/presenters from the preliminary program agenda). Contact authors who did not submit a manuscript for the conference proceedings and make a presentation determination. Staff will revise the agenda and print a final program for on-site distribution to attendees.
6. Attend the Presenters' Breakfast daily at the conference. This continental breakfast is scheduled one hour before the start of the conference technical program each day and is intended to provide the opportunity for presenters to meet with session chairs and discuss final session arrangements. The presenters should provide session chairs with descriptive information (name, company/affiliation, title/job function) for introductory purposes.

In addition, an A&WMA staff representative will lead the discussion of such matters as the use of audiovisual equipment, timing of presentations, the question and answer period, and final manuscript collection for proceedings (if applicable). Any other matters pertaining to a quality execution of the technical program should be discussed at this time.

7. Following the conference, prepare an overview of the conference for inclusion in the conference proceedings (if applicable), as well as for publication in the *Journal* and *EM*.

Identify appropriate papers for consideration of publication in the peer-reviewed *Journal* or for follow-up articles in *EM*.

Send thank-you notes to session chairs for participation in the program.

3. Summary of Roles and Responsibilities for Specialty Conference Chairs, Committee Members, and Session Chairs

Time, Months	Committee Chair	Committee Chair and Members	Session Chairs	Notes
0	Develop a conceptual plan for a Specialty Conference			Jointly with TCC Leadership
0	Select and Recruit Committee Members			
0	Complete and Submit Proposal Form			Jointly with TCC Leadership
1		Outline plans for the Specialty Conference and set timeline for action with planned conference calls		Joint with staff
1		Select and recruit session chairs		
1		Prepare and issue announcement and call for abstracts		Joint with staff
2-6		Actively solicit abstracts	Actively solicit abstracts	
2-6		Evaluate submitted abstracts for gaps and increase effort where needed	Evaluate submitted abstract for gaps and increase effort where needed	
2-6	Plan and hold regular teleconferences to track progress			Include all committee and session chairs
6-7			Review abstracts for acceptance	
6-7		Develop program and notify speakers of acceptance and requirements for an extended abstract or manuscript	Develop program and notify speakers of acceptance and requirements for an extended abstract or manuscript	Joint with staff

7-9			Review submitted extended abstracts or manuscripts for approval	
9-10		Develop final program		
11		Hold conference		Joint with staff
11		Review conference and plans for a follow-on meeting		Joint with staff

B. Details of the Process

There are three phases to the development and execution of a specialty conference.

- Proposal preparation and approval: This effort is designed to help ensure that all elements are in place to create a successful specialty conference.
- Specialty Conference Planning and Development: This effort involves the major work by the specialty conference committees to ensure the conference is a success.
- Specialty Conference Execution: This is the fun part where the fruits of your labor are rewarded with an exciting and successful conference. However, work is still required.

There are several groups involved in the development of the specialty conference.

- Initiator/Promoter: This is the individual(s) who starts the process with a concept for a specialty conference and who will become one of the committee chairs for the execution of the conference.
- Program Chairs/Steering Committee: This will include both the General Conference and Technical Program Chairs and associated members of the Program Committee and the General Committee who will do the bulk of the work in the development and execution of the conference.
- TC Chair/Vice Chair: These Technical Council leaders will approve the program proposal and be resources for the specialty conference committees as needed.
- Headquarters: These are the A&WMA staff who will assist the specialty conference committees in the development and execution of the conference. **It is important to remember that, while they will provide valuable and needed assistance and guidance, they are not the ones responsible for the development of the conference.**
- Session Chairs: It is essential in the early stages of development of the conference that session chairs be identified who can take the lead in promoting various elements of the technical program.

Much of the work to be done in the three phases of the development and execution of a specialty conference has been outlined above. The details of the various steps that must be taken are outlined in the three-phase work processes that follow. A&WMA staff can help prepare

timelines for accomplishing each of the identified tasks and assist in the work of each task. **However, it is important to remember that you, as Specialty Conference Committee Chairs and members, are the ones responsible for seeing that each task is programmed and done.** Experience has taught us that each task is important and none should be overlooked.

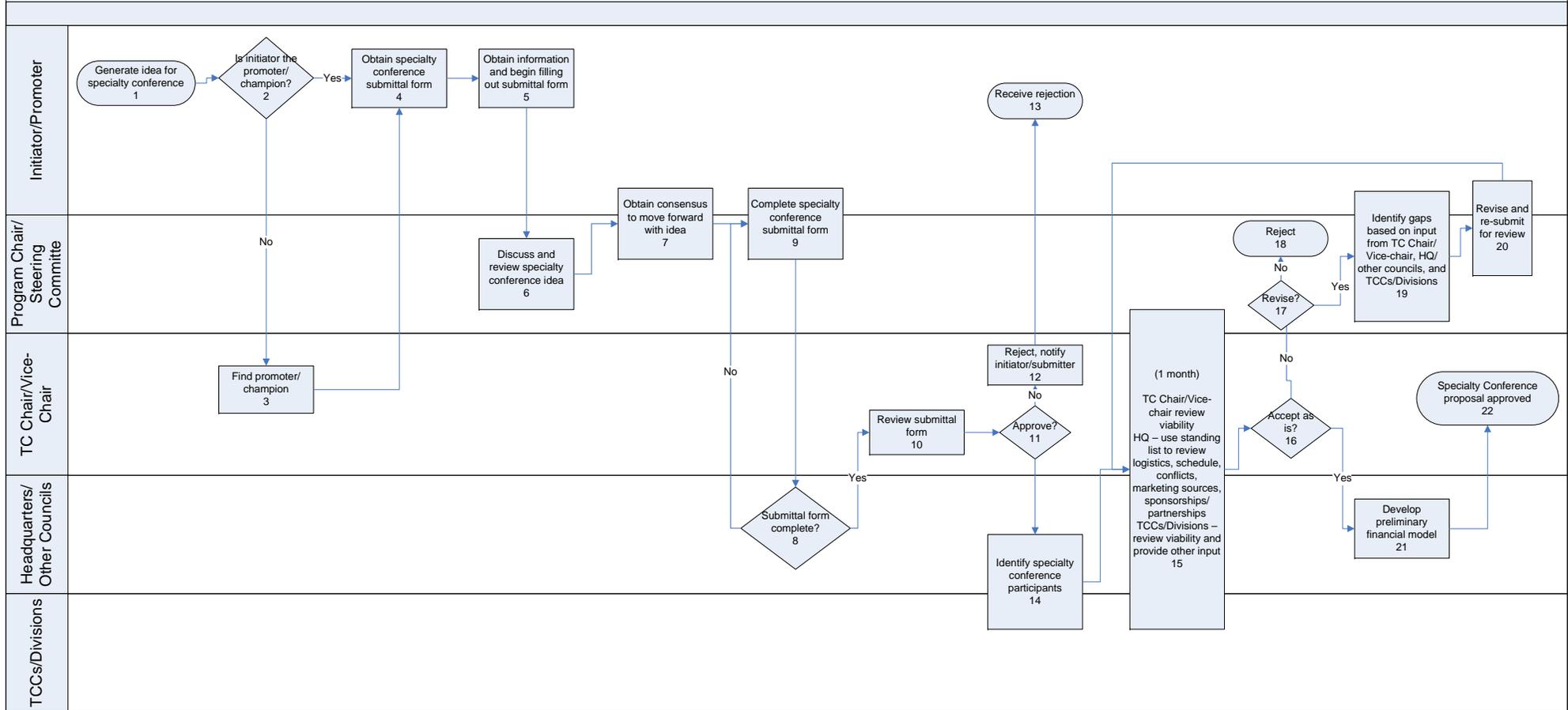
While the effort is significant, the personal rewards for conducting a successful specialty conference are substantial.

If you are not sure of the reasons why a particular task in the following Work Process charts is important or how to proceed with the task, do not hesitate to contact the Chair or Vice-Chair of Technical Council.

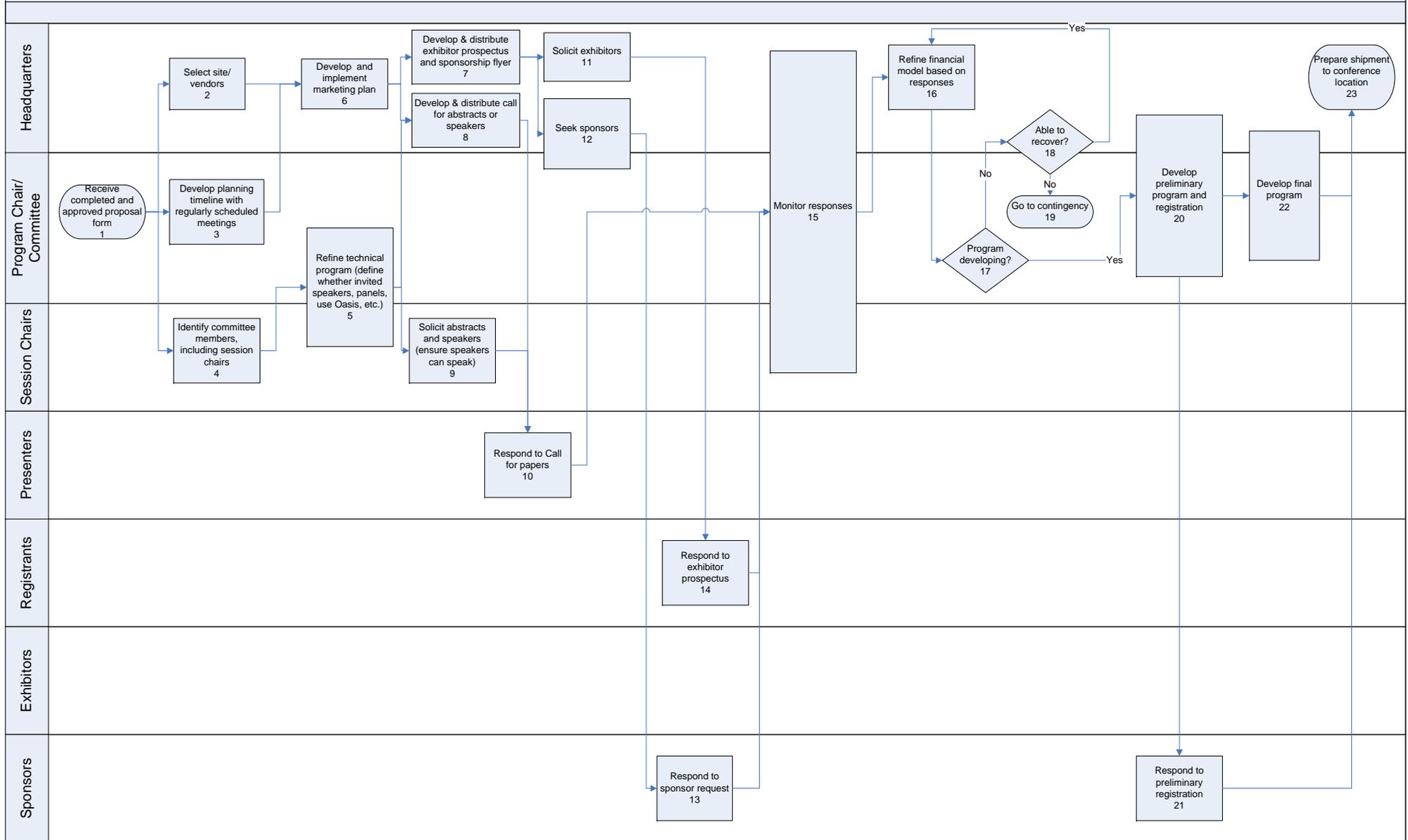
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A&WMA Specialty Conference Proposal Phase Work Process



A&WMA Specialty Conference Planning and Development Phase Work Process



A&WMA Specialty Conference Execution Phase Work Process

