



JUSTIFICATION TOOLKIT

GENERAL TIPS: JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE

- **Demonstrate value.** Provide examples of how the knowledge and information you will bring back from ACE will enhance your value to your team and organization.
- **Coordinate with coworkers.** Develop a plan to show your supervisor who will help with your workload while you're at ACE.
- **Share what you learn.** Offer to give a brief presentation and Q&A session summarizing your ACE experience and everything you've learned.
- **Gain insight.** Highlight that attending ACE offers a convenient and affordable chance to brainstorm with colleagues from across the water community about current solutions to challenges.
- **Discover solutions.** Explain that the most relevant and innovative technologies and ideas in the water industry will be highlighted at ACE.
- **Register early to receive the best rates.** The Early Bird discount ends April 24, 2026. Choose the registration option that best fits you and your organization.
- **Reserve your hotel room early.** Washington, D.C. is a popular destination.

SOME SPECIFIC DETAILS YOU WILL NEED TO IDENTIFY

- **Sessions:** Check the program. Find sessions that are relevant to your organization's work.
- **Training:** Emphasize relevant workshops designed to teach skills that benefit you and your team.
- **Vendors:** Identify exhibitors and tools in the ACE Exhibit Hall that your organization either currently uses or might consider using.
- **Continuing education:** Several sessions offer certificates of completion, which may count toward licensing requirements in some states. Check with your state agency in advance!

EXPENSE WORKSHEET

Conference expenses are affected by several 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 ACE. Refer to the registration and hotel information on the conference website at ace.awwa.org

EXPENSE	GUIDELINE	COST
Conference Registration	Full conference (best value)	\$
Sunday Workshop	Optional (added fee): Targeted training	\$
Ticketed Events	Optional: Facility tours and/or Water Industry Luncheon	\$
Certificate Program	Optional: For public officials only	\$
Flight	Estimate your airfare using online services	\$
Lodging	See ACE26 hotel options	\$
Transportation	Taxi, shuttle, rental car, etc.	\$
Mileage Reimbursement	Driving to the conference or the airport for your flight? Use an online mapping tool to calculate the distance, then multiply it by the cost per mile. (IRS standard for 2026)	\$
Parking Reimbursement	Airport parking for flight departure or at the conference location (convention center or hotel)	\$
Food per Diem	Check your organization's policies	\$
Total		\$

BENEFITS WORKSHEET

You understand the benefits of attending ACE, but your manager may not. To justify attending this conference, clearly articulate the connection between your organization's knowledge requirements and the conference program. Do not assume your manager will automatically see those distinctions.

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

YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BENEFITS	SPECIFIC NEEDS AND THE CONFERENCE SESSIONS
Networking Benefits	ACE will allow us to network with other professionals and exhibitors in the industry. We will be able to take the pulse of what is happening with tools, technologies, and processes and hear ideas we may not have considered.
Team building (if several colleagues will be attending)	This conference will help motivate our team, providing a forum for team members to discuss tools and technologies, and how we might apply them in our company to improve our information, products, workflows, and processes.
Current Tools	
Future Tools Exploration	
Current Technologies	
Future Technologies Exploration	
Current Processes	
Future Processes Exploration	
Exhibitors With Tools & Technologies You Are Exploring	

BASIC: 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!

SAMPLE LETTER 1: BASIC

LETTER TO MANAGER

<Date>

Dear <supervisor's name>,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE), being held in Washington, D.C., June 21-24, 2026. The conference will enable me to attend 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 offer information on how to <list benefits to your responsibilities>.

After reviewing the ACE program, I have identified several professional sessions that will provide knowledge and understanding of how we can improve our operations. The presentations are given by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to enhance my skills, increase efficiency in my role, and share knowledge with my team. By attending, I can bring back information that supports our organization's goals, helping <organization's name> reduce costs and continue to provide safe water to our customers.

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

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

Conference Fee:	<\$XXXX>
Round-Trip Airfare:	<\$XXXX>
Ground	<\$XXXX>
Hotel:	<\$XXXX>
Meals:	<\$XXXX>

The total estimated cost associated with attending this conference is <\$XXXX> (if registered before April 24, 2026).

Please view the conference, exhibits, and networking agenda at ace.awwa.org. I believe the opportunities for our team and <organization's name> will justify the cost of travel and conference expenses.

I am happy to answer any questions and look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,
<your name>

BEST VALUE: HOW TO SELL YOUR ATTENDANCE

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

SAMPLE LETTER 2: BEST VALUE

LETTER TO MANAGER

<Date>

Dear <supervisor's name>,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE) being held in Washington, D.C., June 21-24, 2026.

This conference will enable me to attend several professional sessions directly relevant to my work and provide an opportunity to network with a diverse group of water industry experts and colleagues from around the world. Many presentations are tailored to the <your specific profession> water professional and provide information on how to <list benefits to your responsibilities>.

After reviewing the ACE program, I have identified numerous professional sessions that will enable me to gain knowledge and understanding of how we can enhance our operations. The presentations are led by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to develop my skills, increase efficiency in my role, and share knowledge with my team. By attending, I can bring back information to support our organization's goals that can help <organization's name> reduce costs and continue providing safe water for our customers.

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

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

Conference Fee:	<\$XXXX>
Round-Trip Airfare:	<\$XXXX>
Ground Transportation:	<\$XXXX>
Hotel:	<\$XXXX>
Meals:	<\$XXXX>

The estimated total cost to attend this conference is <\$XXXX> if I register before April 24, 2026. I can participate in the full professional program and dedicate time to networking, and my registration fee includes access to ACE conference proceedings for six months after the event.

This opportunity to develop stronger connections and gain expertise in specific areas of the water industry makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE a wise investment for <organization's name>. The conference agenda is available at ace.awwa.org. I look forward to reviewing the program with you and ultimately to your approval.

Sincerely,

<your name>

FIELD OPERATORS: 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!

SAMPLE LETTER 3: FIELD OPERATOR FULL CONFERENCE

LETTER TO MANAGER

<Date>

Dear <supervisor's name>,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE) being held in Washington, D.C., June 21-24, 2026.

This conference will enable me to attend several professional sessions directly applicable to field operators and will allow me to network with a variety of water industry experts and colleagues from around the world.

After reviewing the ACE program, I have identified numerous professional sessions that will help me gain knowledge and understanding of how we can improve our operations. The presentations are led by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to enhance my skills, boost efficiency in my role, and share knowledge with my team. By attending, I can bring back information to support our organization's goals that can help <organization's name> reduce costs and continue providing safe water for our customers.

These are some of the sessions tailored to field operators:

- <Session Name>
- <Session Name>
- <Session Name>

Here is a breakdown of conference costs:

Conference Fee:	<\$XXXX>
Round-Trip Airfare:	<\$XXXX>
Ground Transportation:	<\$XXXX>
Hotel:	<\$XXXX>
Meals:	<\$XXXX>

The total estimated cost associated with attending this conference is <\$XXXX> (if registered by April 24, 2026). This valuable opportunity will enable me to develop useful contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas of the water industry. This makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE26 a wise investment for <organization's name>. You may view the conference agenda at [ace.awwa.org](https://www.awwa.org/ace). I look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,
<your name>

SMALL UTILITIES: 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!

SAMPLE LETTER 4: SMALL UTILITIES FULL CONFERENCE (3500 CUSTOMERS OR LESS)

LETTER TO MANAGER

<Date>

Dear <supervisor's name>,

I would like to attend AWWA's Annual Conference & Exposition, ACE, being held in Washington, D.C., June 21-24, 2026. The conference will enable me to attend several professional sessions directly applicable to my work and will allow me to network with a variety of water sector experts and colleagues from around the world.

After reviewing the ACE program, I found several professional sessions that will help me gain knowledge and understanding of how we can improve our operations. The presentations are led by industry experts who have faced similar challenges. This is a valuable training opportunity to enhance my skills, increase efficiency in my role, and share knowledge with my team. By attending, I can bring back information to support our organization's goals that can help <organization's name> reduce costs and continue providing safe water for our customers.

These are some of the sessions tailored to smaller utilities:

- <Session Name>
- <Session Name>
- <Session Name>

Here is a breakdown of conference costs:

Conference Fee:	<\$XXXX>
Round-Trip Airfare:	<\$XXXX>
Ground Transportation:	<\$XXXX>
Hotel:	<\$XXXX>
Meals:	<\$XXXX>

The total estimated cost to attend this conference is <\$XXXX> (if registered before April 24, 2026). I can participate in the full professional program, dedicate time to networking, and learn practical solutions that will offer insight into complex problems.

Again, the opportunity to develop better contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas of the water industry makes my attendance at AWWA's ACE a wise investment for <organization's name>. You can view the conference agenda at ace.awwa.org. I look forward to your approval.

Sincerely,

<your name>

American Water Works Association
ace.awwa.org