



# **WORLD PLANNING SCHOOLS CONGRESS 2026: CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

## **World Planning Schools Congress 2026: Call for Proposals**

The aim of this document is to provide guidelines for those institutional members of GPEAN local and regional associations that are interested in presenting proposals to host and organise the Sixth World Planning Schools Congress 2026. The document comprises the following sections:

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## 1. PURPOSE

In July 2001 the first World Planning Schools Congress (WPSC) was held in Shanghai, China, under the joint sponsorship of the Asian Planning Schools Association (APSA), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), and the Australia and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS). In addition to the Congress, meetings held among the participating Associations' leadership led to the Shanghai Statement, which called for the development of a Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN; See [Appendix I](#) for membership and structure) and led to the preparation of other Congresses in México City (2006), Perth (2011), Rio de Janeiro (2016), and Bali (2022).

The WPSC brings together scholars and professionals from all continents, providing opportunities for international academic and scientific exchange, encouraging a debate on current planning problems, experiences, and solutions in different parts of the world.

GPEAN created a WPSC Steering Committee (SC) (see Appendix I), which is responsible to prepare and disseminate the WPSC 2026 call for proposals; together with GPEAN Council select the successful proposal; assist the Host Institution (HI) (which could be one or multiple academic institutions affiliated with one of the eleven GPEAN associations) and its Local Organising Committee (LOC) in planning and organising the Congress. The SC is to provide academic and managerial oversight on the programme content and structure, keynote speakers, program tracks and their chairs; to monitor the progress of congress organisation while providing advice to the LOC. GPEAN welcomes proposals from the members of its associations to host and organise the Sixth World Planning Schools Congress in 2026.

The purpose of this document is to guide the interested schools in proposing the necessary activities according to the suggested timeline ([Appendix II](#)) and ensuring that the WPSC 2026 will be a successful event. Adhering to these guidelines should make it possible for interested institutions to prepare initial proposals without investing unnecessary time and expense and to cover all of the required matters related to the two-stage submission process (see [Appendices III-VI](#) for a checklist and other additional information). It should be emphasized that being selected as a Host Institution (HI) for the Sixth WPSC carries significant responsibilities. Yet, the previous HIs – Tongji University, Shanghai, China; the Autonomous University of Mexico; the University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Indonesian Planning Schools Association (ASPI) – attest that the investment of time and resources is an extremely worthwhile undertaking and a rewarding experience for faculty, students, the host institution and the city/region where the congress is held.

## 2. GENERAL CONGRESS MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Once a HI is chosen and a LOC is set up, the SC and LOC will define responsibilities to prepare the WPSC, according to an agreement to be signed by the HI and GPEAN ([Appendix VII](#)). The LOC is to propose the theme, identify the venues and address other requirements set forth in this call for proposals. The SC provides academic and managerial oversight and exercises strategic leadership and international facilitation, selecting the main keynote speakers, tracks and their chairs in collaboration with LOC. This arrangement was initiated with the WPSC'01 in Shanghai, and followed Mexico City, Perth, Rio, and Bali, and was effective in hosting congresses that each drew on average more than 600 participants.

In 2026, the host should be prepared to accommodate around 800-1,000 participants contingent upon location, costs and economic climate. The LOC, through a system of Track Chairs set in place by the SC, coordinates the abstract submission and approval processes. The LOC will structure the final program, under SC overall advice. It is the primary role of the LOC to ensure that all of the local arrangements are handled thoroughly and competently for all Congress activities.



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### 3. SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals to host the Sixth WPSC will be submitted via a two-stage process. In the first stage, applicants will submit a preliminary proposal. The SC will make a selection of viable Congress proposals and invite the short-listed institutions to prepare a full proposal. The SC will provide feedback to those proposals that are on the shortlist in an effort to make the final proposals as strong and complete as possible.

The final selection will be made by GPEAN Council (**December 2023**). In the case when the current representative to GPEAN is a member of an institution submitting a proposal, the regional/national association will either suggest an alternative representative or the current representative will be excluded from the deliberations, leaving any regional/national association's letter of endorsement to serve as the only input to the selection process. Following the final selection, the SC will undertake a site visit to confirm the suitability of the application with regard to venues, financial and processing viability (e.g., acceptance of international credit cards), institutional support, website operability, logistics, and other factors that will ensure a successful event.

### 4. IMPORTANT DATES:

Submission of the preliminary proposals: **August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

Announcement of selections: **September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

Submission of the final proposals: **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

### 4. ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

GPEAN encourages a creative approach to the congress proposals, considering the requirements for using English as the primary language. The preliminary proposal must contain the elements indicated in the following subsections, considering also the [Appendices III to IV](#): information on Congress dates and venue, transportation and accommodation facilities, local organising committee, Congress theme and tracks, and evidence of the financial viability of the proposal (an indicative budget) including the expected budget, potential sponsors, funding opportunities together with the supporting documents (e.g. letter of endorsement of the HI).

The SC will consider the following when selecting initial proposals for the second stage: how effectively the proposal addresses the items discussed in this section of this call; evidence that there is a commitment to carry out the program that will be developed by 2026; creativity and innovation in Congress activities (while upholding a tradition of wide ranging scholarly exchange in planning education); and the quality of the Congress site and facilities.

The final proposal of those short-listed will expand on the preliminary proposal by providing information with greater detail. This is to allow sufficient information to be available to permit due diligence by GPEAN Council in assessing the robustness of the final proposal and capacity of the HI/LOC to deliver a successful Congress.

#### 4.1. Congress Dates

A July Congress date is preferred in 2026, ensuring that the Congress dates do not conflict with other related conferences. It should be noted that the Congress should fall within a one-week core period (Monday to Sunday), including pre-Congress activities, to permit participants to work within their academic schedules. It is also recommended that the schedule is about a weekend, to permit registrants



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to take advantage of any airlines' pricing for a "Saturday Night Stay," which may be of particular relevance for domestic travel in many markets.

*The candidates should be aware that timing is fundamental to the success of the event considering the suggested timetable ([Appendix II](#)).*



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### 4.2. Congress Venue

In order to accommodate the WPSC, it is necessary to identify sufficient facilities for attendees and should ensure a pleasant, accessible and functional setting. Accessibility is important both relative to the external environment (hotels, city centre, transports) and internally – the venue should be compact and easy to move around, with minimal time lost in reaching different sessions, and with adequate rooms considering equipment (computers and projectors), ventilation, illumination, temperature and noise control.

The venue would comprise rooms of various sizes, considering *a combination of*: at least one of about 1,000-person capacity for plenaries; three about 100-200 capacity; about ten of 50-70 capacity; about ten of 20-30 capacity; business office; large foyer for registration and exhibits; some spare rooms for speaker preparation, meetings of various groups (e.g., special interest, journal editorial boards) or other ad hoc requests. All session and meeting rooms should be equipped with projectors, screens, pointers, internet access, and audio, and assisted by technical staff. As many rooms as possible should be accessible to disabled people. The entire session is expected to be recorded as video footage and photos, which then will become part of the congress documentation.

The use of university facilities available during academic breaks has been a good strategy for keeping costs down. Conference/convention centres or hotels may be considered but have been known to drive costs up. With that in mind, it is necessary to fully justify the selection of the venue in the proposal.

Finally, it is recommended that the proposal include an opening reception and dinner venue (or potential venues) for 1,000 or more people. As these venues may only be secured after the bid is awarded, the venues may be visited by the SC during the first site visit to participate in the decision for these venues. Cost of the venue should be presented in the proposal budget. If the dinner is in addition to the opening reception, it can be an additional cost to participants over and above the congress fees.

Based on the experience of WPSC V Congress, to reach the planning schools community around the world, it is recommended that the congress be carried out also including separate online sessions which will exist parallelly with the in-person sessions. However, a hybrid model (online and offline) is also encouraged.

***Once a proposal is selected, it is strongly recommended that the Congress venue is reserved as soon as possible.***

### 4.3. Transportation and Accommodation Facilities

In the proposal it is necessary to identify and briefly assess available transportation options that serve the Congress site (air carriers, rail service, etc.), with some attention to typical costs (round trip) between major urban centres as well as frequency of service. (Include at least prices for travel from the following origins to the proposed Congress site: New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, London, Paris, Shanghai, Tokyo, Auckland, Sydney, Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro, and Mexico City. Be mindful that prices may vary according to where the ticket is sold.) Also, a table should be provided with information on visa requirements and difficulties participants would have obtaining visas for entering the country of the Congress.

It is necessary in the initial proposal to identify hotels that can accommodate 75% of the participants (or more) in rooms with both single and double occupancy, as well as some arrangements for student accommodation. The per night room costs are important to Congress registrants and it is important to identify a range of appropriate options at different price points. Accommodation cost will be a consideration in the Congress site selection. Room quotes in US dollars or Euros are preferable to those incorporating conversion, inflation, currency adjustment mechanisms.



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### 4.4. Host institution (HI) and Available Resources

It is necessary to provide information about the resources the HI can provide and the structures that would be put in place to ensure the success of the WPSC. The initial proposal should address: What are the resources available? What are the key preparatory activities? Who is responsible for them (starting when, for how long, at what cost)?

The proposing institution is expected to have the capacity to build and/or host a specific website for the WPSC.

It is expected in the initial proposal that the chief academic officer(s) of the bidding institution(s) will provide a letter of endorsement of the proposal indicating the full backing of the institution, including assuring the availability of the human and other resources necessary to mobilize for the WPSC 2026.

### 4.5. Conference Theme

The initial proposal should indicate a proposed conference theme of interest to the world community and its rationale. It should discuss suggested special sessions and mobile workshops that highlight the conference theme. The theme should be international in scope, yet reflective of local insights, experiences and conditions and should provide a critical reflection on important issues to the state of art of urban and regional planning praxis and research, considering its global reach. The theme must remit to questions that are considered important universally or by as many countries/world regions as possible. GPEAN suggests that the general theme should somehow be consistent with the “Where does planning go from here?” “World Agenda for Planners and Beyond” or “State of the Art and the Near Future for Planning” rubric. A list of previous WPSC themes and their rationales is available in [Appendix V](#).

A Congress logo should be designed and decided upon early in the time of bidding. The logo gives the Congress organisers and their place an identity and facilitates their communication to a wider audience. The logo should be displayed side by side after GPEAN and the GPEAN Associations’ logos, signalling the nature of the partnership.

### 4.6. Financial Issues

The HI/LOC takes full financial responsibility for the WPSC. The initial proposal should provide an indicative budget, including details of in-kind contributions, in an itemized format. It should specify registration fees and sponsorships. It has become customary to differentiate registration fees for students and also for scholars from low-income countries (per U.N. or World Bank classifications). Sponsorship values should only be included if contributions are already in-hand. All figures used at all stages of the proposal should be presented either in US dollars or in Euros. (The value of faculty – teaching and research staff – time may not be included in in-kind contribution calculations.)

The HI/LOC should expect careful collaboration and oversight from SC/GPEAN throughout the Congress preparation process to ensure the success of the overall effort. Therefore, the HI/LOC should be prepared to provide the complete detailed budget to SC/GPEAN on an ongoing basis or no less than every three months. This is not only to ensure the success of the effort but also to provide guidance for future applicants and future Congresses. The budget proposal should incorporate a 10% of total registration fees that would be transferred to GPEAN to support the GPEAN’s fund, which will be used for future network activities. The way how these funds will be transferred to GPEAN will be defined in the agreement.

***Please note that the HI/LOC will have to cover the cost of travel and accommodation for the representatives of WPSC SC to visit the Congress site at least two times, as well as to provide free registration for GPEAN Council (about 15).***



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### 4.7. Student Involvement and Activities

Applicants are encouraged to include a plan for student involvement in scheduled pre-Congress events as well as activities / roles for students during the Congress itself. An example of a pre-Congress event is a PhD Workshop. Another option could include joint studios for Master's students from international and local universities or their involvement in the Mobile Workshops. See WPSC 2022 website for list and details of student activities through <https://wpsc.org> or directly at <https://wpsc-apsa2022.org/>

### 5. PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

A copy of the preliminary proposal and accompanying attachments should be sent by **August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023** to [admin@wpsc.org](mailto:admin@wpsc.org). Any questions about the proposal preparation process should be addressed to the same email.

### 6. FINAL PROPOSAL ELABORATION AND SUBMISSION

The selected candidates will have two months to prepare a final proposal considering the information in [Appendices III and IV](#). SC will provide feedback to the short-listed proposals that would help with the development of the final proposal in terms of provision of missing or more detailed information. Questions about the final proposal preparation process should be emailed to the following e-mail: [admin@wpsc.org](mailto:admin@wpsc.org). A copy of the final proposal and accompanying attachments should be emailed by **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023** to the same address.