

4.10. Visa

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4.10.1. APC-hosted or co-hosted convenings

APC recognises the limitations, challenges and discrimination by visa regimes on the free mobility of its staff, members/partners and invitees to convenings APC it organises or attends with a delegation.

For this reason, APC is committed to not only providing the necessary support to participants throughout the visa process but also to integrate measures from the convening planning stage that will help avoid or reduce discrimination participants may face during the application.

We have learned through organising convenings and managing risk assessments that as an international organisation with registration in the USA and Spain, APC holds a privileged role as an institution, and hence is able to provide support and shield participants from intimidating visa enquiries.

For this reason we record visa as a risk in all our convenings Risk Assessment and as mitigation and safety measure, we indicate that for any convening that APC programmes/teams organise we must use Conference visas as our standard and shared approach. If an exception is envisioned for a different type of visa such as Tourist visa which poses a risk on the participants, this exception needs to be shared well in advance and discussed with the Operations Manger as part of the Event or Individual Risk Assessment.

APC-hosted or co-hosted convenings

For a convening hosted or co-hosted by APC, the country visa requirements constitute one of the basic criteria that can determine if a location is suitable for the convening. This means that visas need to be factored in all country comparison exercises at the early stage of planning.

The convening countries will be identified based on the actual visa information obtained for the intended participants' nationalities. Countries that offer more flexible and easier visa processes will be preferred against countries with more restrictive visa requirements.

A country with no visa required or easier entry requirements for a majority of the participants and a country that requires most participants to have a visa but offers a clear and expedited electronic visa system can be equally recommended.

Roles and responsibilities

The convening point of contact will ask the convening lead to suggest up to three countries that would best respond to the convening.

The convening point of contact will provide the APC convening lead an indication about expected number of participants, expected nationalities, and any additional available information about the participants (i.e. women's human right defenders, LGBTQIA+ persons, sex workers and so on), and available budget.

The convening lead, based on the information received, has up to two weeks to come back with their recommendation about the location.

4.10.2. APC delegations or APC satellite events to external convenings

In all cases when the location of an event is not decided by APC or the convening, due to its nature, requires to happen in specific countries, the following will apply:

- Convening timeline needs to be adapted and extended if necessary to respond to the specific visa requirements for participants in a timely fashion.
- The host country entry requirements are clear to the convening coordination team and
- The host organisation will provide the visa invitation letter to participants.
- APC will provide other visa support documents such as dummy bookings of flights and/or

4.10.3. Types of visa

APC is committed to provide support for conference visa as the type that provides the higher transparency about reason for the visit, and therefore safety and protection from immigration scrutiny.

In cases where APC cannot support the conference visa process, the organising programme/team will seek partnership with local organizations or other services providers such as travel agencies. It is only exceptionally and on a case by case base that APC would approve using Tourist VISA.

Tourist visas always require explicit consent of staff / participants. Tourist visas involve declaring themselves as individuals travelling to the country for tourism purposes during the immigration process. We understand that for some participants this could prove stressful, and therefore it is important to ensure clear and timely communications to participants explaining the reason behind the suggested visa type and assist participants throughout the process.

4.10.4. Visa support systems

Local partners' support

When a conference visa is the only acceptable option for participants, support from a local partner becomes mandatory, as APC cannot provide invitations without having registration in the host country.

APC will sign MoUs with local trusted institutions that can provide the support to the event and the participants, mainly regarding visa, including the issuance of visa invitation letters. The APC Ops manager is responsible for supporting the convening point of contact to either identify an on-site resource person that can assist in verifying visa and immigration procedures, or identify a local partner (registered civil society organisation, visa services providers, organisations, institutions, lawyers) each time visa requirements and/or the size and complexity of the events would benefit from such additional support.

In these cases, the Ops manager is also responsible for developing the corresponding subcontract, MoU or a service sub-agreement and, once all elements of the ToR are agreed upon, inform the APC Ops director and get their clearance for finalising and signing the document. Once this is done, a copy will be stored in the appropriate repository by the APC HR officer.

[For MoU and event subcontract procedures please see here.](#)

4.10.5. Information and supporting documentation for visa application

It is the responsibility of the convenings lead or the Ops programme staff to reach out individually to each of the participants and share the event's corresponding visa information and support documents the APC will provide, together with an indication of the time for the provision of the support documentation.

[Templates, timeline and workflow for visa support can be found here.](#)

4.10.6. Host information

APC will make sure to provide the correct details of the host organisation to all participants applying for visa. These can be the organisation's name, address, email, telephone contact and other details required to be filled in the visa application forms.

4.10.7. Visa support documents

Following the communication about the visa, the convening lead will create the repository for visa support and store in there all the supporting documentation in separate folders:

- Venue confirmation of accommodation: The convening lead is responsible for asking the venue to produce individual confirmation of accommodation.
- Dummy bookings (flights and hotels): The convening lead or the Ops programme staff is responsible to provide dummy bookings for flights and/or hotels when necessary. It is recommended to always provide a dummy flight ticket for visa application, and only confirming the flight booking once the visa is approved. In the case of hotels or accommodations, there might be cases where the actual accommodation is not confirmed by the time the participant needs to apply for visa; in these cases, a hotel dummy reservation can apply. APC-accredited travel agents are capable to produce these dummy tickets.
- Visa support letters: The convening coordination team is responsible for producing a fitting paragraph with the description and purpose of the event and the role of the participants. The convening lead will produce a general visa support template letter mentioning the description and purpose of the event and stating all relevant personal details of the participant, duration of stay, and express mention of the financial support APC is providing.

It is a responsibility of the Ops manager to make sure visa support letters are signed by the APC operations director as well as to coordinate with the local partner for defining the process of signing visa invitation letters for APC-supported participants.

- **Visa Letters Templates**
- Visa employment letters (APC staff only): It is the responsibility of the staff applying for a visa to request this letter directly from the APC HR team). The Ops core team will inform the staff participant of the steps to follow.

The convening lead is responsible for creating the corresponding folders within the event folder in Share2 where all the visa support documentation will be stored.

Visa invitation letters will be provided by APC only for convenings hosted or co-hosted by APC. When APC cannot sign the invitation letter due to limitations of non-local organisations to host events, APC will find a local partner to co-host the convening.

For all other external convenings in which APC participates, the invitation letter that is expected to be used in the visa application is the one provided by the hosts of the external convening. In these cases, APC can provide a support letter to participants that states the financial support provided to cover flights, accommodation, etc.