

GUIDELINES FOR PROSPECTIVE HOSTS OF THE ASAA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Official Conference Hosting Manual

Adopted by the Executive Committee

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. About the African Studies Association of Africa
3. Purpose of these Guidelines
4. The ASAA Biennial Conference
5. Institutional Eligibility
6. Conference Governance
7. Responsibilities of the Host Institution
8. Responsibilities of the ASAA
9. Conference Planning Standards
10. Financial Management
11. Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainability
12. Conference Legacy and Publications
13. Selection Process
14. Reporting Requirements
15. Annexes

1. Introduction

The Biennial Conference of the African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA) is the Association's flagship scholarly event and the principal forum through which it advances African-centered knowledge production, interdisciplinary dialogue, and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, artists, policymakers, and civil society from across Africa and the wider world.

Hosting an ASAA Biennial Conference is both an honor and a strategic partnership. It offers host institutions the opportunity to showcase their academic leadership while contributing to the growth of one of Africa's leading scholarly associations.

These Guidelines establish the principles, standards, responsibilities, and procedures governing the selection of host institutions and the organization of ASAA conferences. They aim to ensure consistency, transparency, accountability, and excellence in all conferences organized under the auspices of the Association.

2. About the African Studies Association of Africa

Founded in 2013, the African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA) is a pan-African scholarly association dedicated to advancing the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge about Africa from African perspectives.

The Association promotes:

- African-centered scholarship;
- interdisciplinary research;
- intellectual exchange across disciplines and sectors;
- collaboration between scholars on the continent and in the diaspora;
- mentorship of graduate students and early-career scholars;
- public engagement and policy dialogue.

Through its conferences, publications, thematic networks, and fellowship programs, ASAA contributes to strengthening African higher education, research, and intellectual leadership globally.

3. Purpose of these Guidelines

These Guidelines are intended to:

- establish minimum standards for hosting ASAA conferences;
- provide a transparent framework for selecting host institutions;
- clarify the respective responsibilities of ASAA and host institutions;
- ensure sound governance and financial accountability;
- promote inclusive, accessible, and environmentally responsible conferences;
- strengthen the long-term institutional legacy of each conference.

4. The ASAA Biennial Conference

The ASAA Biennial Conference is typically convened biennially in the month of October. The conference generally attracts a participant range of **500 to 800 individuals**, representing universities, research institutes, think tanks, government agencies, civil society organizations, cultural institutions, and international partners.

The conference normally extends over **five days**, comprising:

Days One and Two

Pre-Conference Programme

- Doctoral Academy
- Early Career Scholars Forum

- Professional Development Workshops
- Editorial Workshops
- Meetings of ASAA Networks
- Public Dialogues
- Policy Roundtables

Days Three to Five

Main Conference

- Opening Ceremony
- Presidential Address
- Keynote Lectures
- Plenary Sessions
- Parallel Panels
- Roundtables
- Film Screenings
- Book Launches
- Poster Sessions
- Artistic Performances
- Exhibitions
- Business Meeting
- Closing Ceremony

5. Institutional Eligibility

Institutions wishing to host the ASAA Biennial Conference should demonstrate excellence in four areas.

5.1 Institutional Standing

Eligible institutions must:

- be located in Africa.
- be recognized universities, research institutes, scholarly organizations, or think tanks.
- demonstrate alignment with ASAA's mission and values.

Host institutions should be institutional members of ASAA or commit to obtaining institutional membership before the conference planning period begins.

5.2 Organizational Capacity

Prospective hosts should demonstrate the ability to organize an international conference for approximately 500–800 participants, including adequate administrative, logistical, financial, and human resource capacity.

5.3 Institutional Commitment

The institution should demonstrate strong support from its senior leadership and commit appropriate staff, facilities, and financial oversight to ensure the successful organization of the conference.

5.4 Partnership

Hosting the ASAA Conference is a collaborative undertaking. Institutions should demonstrate a willingness to work closely with the Executive Committee throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases.

6. Conference Governance

The conference shall be jointly governed through a partnership between ASAA and the Host Institution.

The principal governance structures shall include:

- ASAA Executive Committee
- Local Organising Committee (LOC)
- Scientific Committee
- Conference Manager
- ASAA Executive Secretary

The Local Organising Committee should normally comprise representatives of the host institution together with members appointed by the Executive Committee.

7. Responsibilities of the Host Institution

The Host Institution shall assume primary responsibility for local organization and logistical coordination. These responsibilities include:

Conference Facilities

Provision of:

- a plenary venue accommodating at least 500 participants;
- multiple breakout rooms;
- exhibition areas;
- registration facilities;
- networking spaces.

Technical Infrastructure

Provision of:

- reliable internet;
- projection facilities;
- sound systems;
- hybrid participation technology where feasible;
- technical support.

Accommodation and Travel

The Host Institution should:

- negotiate discounted accommodation;
- assist participants with reservations;
- facilitate airport transfers where possible;
- provide guidance on local transportation.

Visa Support

The Host Institution shall:

- issue invitation letters;
- provide information regarding visa procedures;
- liaise with relevant authorities where appropriate.

Catering

Appropriate catering should include:

- coffee breaks;
- lunches;
- dietary accommodations;
- refreshments throughout the conference.

Volunteer Program

The Local Organizing Committee should recruit and supervise volunteers to assist with registration, room management, participant support, and conference logistics.

Accessibility

Host institutions shall ensure that conference facilities are reasonably accessible to participants with disabilities and provide appropriate accommodations whenever possible.

Safety and Welfare

Hosts should prepare contingency plans addressing:

- medical emergencies;
- participant security;
- safeguarding;
- emergency evacuation procedures.

8. Responsibilities of ASAA

The ASAA will develop an MOU with the host institution to outline the modalities for executing each party's responsibilities and the share-out plan for any remaining funds or equipment at the end of the conference. ASAA shall retain responsibility for the academic direction and institutional oversight of the conference. These responsibilities include:

- approving the conference theme;
- issuing the Call for Papers;
- overseeing peer review;
- appointing keynote speakers in consultation with the LOC;
- supporting fundraising;
- managing conference branding;
- coordinating publications;
- organizing the General Assembly;
- supervising implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

9. Conference Planning Standards

Host institutions should ensure:

- efficient registration procedures;
- effective communication with delegates;
- professional conference management;
- transparent procurement procedures;
- environmentally responsible practices.

Conference planning should begin no later than eighteen months before the event.

10. Financial Management

The conference budget shall be jointly developed by ASAA and the Host Institution. Financial management shall follow recognized principles of transparency and accountability.

The Host Institution shall:

- maintain conference accounts;
- document expenditures;
- provide interim financial reports;
- Submit a final financial report within 60 days of the conference.

Specific arrangements regarding revenue sharing, sponsorship income, and management of conference surpluses shall be detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

11. Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainability

ASAA expects conferences to embody the values of equity and inclusion. Host institutions should actively promote:

- gender balance;
- regional representation;
- linguistic diversity;
- participation of scholars with disabilities;
- participation of graduate students and early-career scholars;
- participation from low-income countries.

Hosts should also adopt environmentally sustainable conference practices, including waste reduction, responsible procurement, and digital documentation where possible.

Each conference should adopt:

- a Code of Conduct;
- an Accessibility Statement;
- a Diversity and Inclusion Statement;
- a Safeguarding Policy.

12. Conference Legacy

Each conference should generate lasting scholarly and institutional outcomes. Host institutions are encouraged to collaborate with ASAA in producing:

- conference proceedings;

- special issues of ASAA's *Bokutani* Journal;
- edited volumes;
- policy briefs;
- multimedia resources;
- public engagement initiatives.

The conference should strengthen long-term partnerships between ASAA, the Host Institution, and the wider scholarly community.

13. Selection Process

Selection of host institutions shall normally proceed through the following stages:

1. Publication of the Call for Proposals;
2. Submission of bids;
3. Administrative review;
4. Technical evaluation;
5. Interviews with shortlisted institutions (where applicable);
6. Recommendation by the Evaluation Committee;
7. Approval by the Executive Committee;
8. Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Evaluation shall consider:

Criterion	Weight
Institutional Capacity	20%
Conference Facilities	20%
Financial Capacity	20%
Logistics and Accessibility	15%
Academic Vision	15%
Inclusion and Sustainability	10%

14. Reporting Requirements

Within sixty days following the conference, the Host Institution shall submit:

- Narrative Report;
- Financial Report;
- Participant Statistics;
- Evaluation Summary;
- Recommendations for Future Conferences.

These reports shall contribute to institutional learning and continuous improvement.

15. Annexes

The following documents form an integral part of these Guidelines***:

- Conference Hosting Checklist
- Conference Timeline
- Sample Budget Template
- Risk Management Matrix
- Accessibility Checklist
- Sustainability Checklist
- Communications Plan Template
- Code of Conduct Template
- Memorandum of Understanding Template
- Conference Evaluation Form

Concluding Statement

The African Studies Association of Africa welcomes proposals from institutions that share its commitment to advancing African scholarship, fostering inclusive intellectual communities, and strengthening the continent's research infrastructure. Through collaborative partnerships built on academic excellence, sound governance, and shared responsibility, the ASAA Biennial Conference will continue to serve as a leading platform for shaping the future of African Studies in Africa and beyond.

ENQUIRIES

For questions or additional information, please contact the ASAA Executive Secretary (info@as-aa.org).

Thank you in advance for your interest in hosting an ASAA conference.

***: The Executive Committee of the African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA) extends an invitation for proposals from institutions of higher education, think tanks, or other venues of intellectual engagement within Africa to co-host its Biennial Conferences in 2027 and 2029. Additionally, proposals are welcomed for intermittent seminars, workshops, symposia, retreats, and various other activities.

ASAA Biennial Conferences are held in October and are organized by a Local Organizing Committee led by an ASAA member. These conferences are designed to advance the association's values, mission, and objectives, as outlined in its constitution and by-laws. To be conducted under the auspices of the Association, organizers must obtain approval for their proposals from the ASAA Executive Committee.

The ASAA Biennial Conferences typically attract between 400 and 1000 delegates over approximately five days - comprising two days of Pre-Conference Workshops, Public Dialogues and Debates, followed by three days of

conference activities, including plenaries, roundtables, parallel sessions, panel discussions, keynote addresses, performances, exhibitions, film screenings, poster presentations, and cultural events.

Co-hosts must be current institutional members of ASAA or commit to attaining such membership by January 2027. They must demonstrate dedication and institutional readiness to host the ASAA Biennial Conference in 2027, 2029, or other proposed activities. Furthermore, they should be able to organize the event on the designated dates and accommodate a large number of participants. It is also essential that they demonstrate sufficient strategic, administrative, human resource, and financial capacity to effectively plan and execute the event. Additionally, co-hosts should be willing to collaborate with ASAA in planning, fundraising, implementation, and post-conference reporting. They should also demonstrate the ability to mobilize, manage, and account for funds and resources related to the conference.

Proposals to host a conference

1. Proposals to host a conference must be submitted via the online Conference Hosting Bid platform, typically two years prior to the scheduled event. Deadlines for proposal submissions are published on the website, and submissions must be received by the Conference Secretary on or before the specified date.

2. The proposals for hosting an ASAA conference request prospective local organizers to submit an outline of the conference's purpose and objectives, its alignment with the values, mission, and goals of the ASAA, as well as detailed information regarding the proposed plenary speakers, the composition of the scientific committee, websites, and registration procedures. These must be approved by the Executive Committee prior to the advertisement of the event.

3. In accordance with the values, mission, and objectives of the ASAA, Local Organizers are kindly requested to give special consideration to creating an environment conducive to interdisciplinary (STEAMS) and multisectoral engagement—encompassing academics, policymakers, activists, artists, and other stakeholders—as well as to facilitating participation by scholars, including academics, students, administrators, and managers.

Furthermore, they should provide opportunities for graduate students, particularly PhD candidates and other Early-Career Academics (ECAs), to network, present their research, and receive valuable feedback on their ongoing projects. Additionally, provisions should be made for the ASAA Pan African Fellowship Program and the ASAA Journal: *Bokutani* to organize pre-conference workshops and meetings specifically for PhD candidates and other ECAs attending the conference.

4. The Annual General Meeting of the ASAA is scheduled to take place during the conference, lasting approximately 2 to 4 hours. Additionally, Local Organizers will be requested to provide the necessary support required to ensure the successful conduct of this hybrid meeting for ASAA members.

5. A meeting of the ASAA Executive Committee is scheduled to convene at the conference venue on the day preceding the commencement of the conference. Additionally, local organizers will be requested to provide a suitable room and supplementary facilities, such as internet access and printing or copying services, as specified by the Executive Secretary of the Association.

6. Conference organizers shall be required to submit a comprehensive written report, encompassing both narrative and financial aspects, regarding the event to the ASAA Executive Committee within two months following the conclusion of the conference. This report ought to incorporate feedback obtained from delegates through a questionnaire.

Please note the following

- Participants of the ASAA conferences are not mandated to be members; however, they are encouraged to obtain membership with the ASAA. Kindly ensure that this consideration is reflected in your bid, including the management of the registration process, as membership fees are to be paid directly to the ASAA. The current membership fees are as follows:
- When funding is available and applicable, the ASAA is pleased to offer a limited number of scholarships to its members—both students and non-students—for attendance at ASAA conferences, symposia, workshops, and seminars. These competitive scholarships are accessible to ASAA members whose abstracts have been accepted and are awarded based on the quality of the application and financial need, with particular consideration given to applicants from low-income countries. Fellowships typically do not cover all expenses. The ASAA will offer three levels of fellowships only: \$1000, \$500, or \$250, and encourages Local Organizers to consider providing their own fellowships, bursaries, and sponsorships.
- The Local Organizing Committee bears the responsibility for recruiting volunteers for conferences, including academics and student assistants for chairing parallel sessions, among other duties.
- Bidders for conferences, symposia, workshops, and seminars are encouraged to consider and incorporate available facilities and services for vulnerable groups, and to summarize these in their submissions.
- The ASAA requests that Local Organizers give particular attention to diversity and inclusion initiatives. They are also required to submit a Statement and a Code of Conduct Statement for the conferences, subject to review and approval by the Executive Committee. If the university associated with the Local Organizing Committee has established similar policies, guidelines, and statements, the Local Organizers are mandated to utilize those, provided they have received prior approval from the ASAA Executive Committee.
- Organizers of the ASAA conferences are advised to consider the publication of proceedings, propose special issues of *Bokutani*, edited volumes, and policy briefs; and additionally, to disseminate the proceedings across various platforms and media. A comprehensive plan or strategy for communication, dissemination, publication, and publicity is required.