

AUSTRALIAN WATER

ASSOCIATION

JUSTIFY YOUR ATTENDANCE YOUR HOW-TO GUIDE

With the grasp on company budgets becoming tighter, we understand that it can be difficult to communicate the value and return on investment of attending a beneficial industry event like the 2023 Ozwater Young Water Professionals Program to your employer.

That's why we've developed a how-to guide to help you convey the direct benefits to your employer. Download and read the pack and adjust it to suit your needs.

FIRST UP

- Remember to highlight what you can bring back from your experience that will benefit your organisation, whether it be new contacts, knowledge, technology, or business opportunities.
- Put your hand up to deliver a presentation on your learnings from the event and how your organisation can build on the opportunities the event has presented.
- Have a plan in place for when you're out of the office. Who will make decisions on your behalf? Who will complete any unfinished activities?
- Familiarise yourself with the program and identify the speakers you'd like to network with. Learn about them and have some questions ready for when the time comes.

Register now at www.ozwater.org

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PUT IT IN WRITING

Most organisations will require your proposal to attend a conference or event in writing. That's why we've developed the template below.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear <insert name>,

I would like to attend the 2023 Ozwater Young Water Professionals Program to be held on 9 May 2023 at ICC Sydney and hosted by the Australian Water Association – the peak industry body for water professionals. This year, the full-day Ozwater Young Water Professionals (YWP) program will tie into the overarching Ozwater theme of 'United by Water'.

I have received the registration guide and preliminary program which details the benefits of attending. I see the return on investment as a major benefit for our department as it aligns with the following business priorities:

- <insert priority>
- <insert priority>
- <insert priority>

The Ozwater Young Water Professionals Program will enhance my understanding of how to integrate passion for water and sustainability into action and plans for our water future. The event will also provide valuable business development and networking opportunities.

Across the full day, I will be able to:

- Hear from and network with some of the world's most influential minds;
- Be inspired by keynote presenters; and
- Attend a panel session on data and digital transformation;
- Join an interactive session on resilience in a changing climate and collaborate with my peers;
- Join an afternoon site tour;
- Benefit from networking opportunities with a diverse range of young water professionals from Australia and across the Indo-Pacific.

In return, the company will be recognised as a leading business that recognises and rewards the contribution of YWPs in their organisation, making it the 'Employer of Choice' of many brilliant professionals. Moreover, this event will enhance my awareness of the emerging issues in the water industry, which will directly benefit the company.

I would like to seek approval for a total investment of <insert total cost> (incl. GST) at an AWA member rate.

For more information on this event, please visit www.ozwater.org.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

<Insert standard close>

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OUTLINE THE BENEFITS

You might be aware of the benefits of attending the Ozwater'23 Young Water Professionals Program, but your approving manager may not. Their decision to, or not to, invest in your development is often not based on their belief of the value or otherwise of developing you, but rather the way in which they are able to justify the investment.

In any investment justification process, it is critical for the approving body to understand the benefit for them in investing in you. Rather than spending time outlining the ways in which the YWP Program will benefit you as a means of justifying their investment, align potential outcomes to key company benefits.

The following table lists a number of open questions which are designed to make you think about how your own skills and knowledge development through the YWP Program might benefit your organisation. Importantly, you must take the time to make sure the benefits you are stating are both tangible and specific to your organisation's needs.

SAMPLE BENEFITS TABLE	
Your company's benefits	<p>How will learning about the various aspects of the program enhance the way you do your role and the value you generate in it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does your work involve delivering projects that directly link to any of the key topics?• Does your work involve development of business cases that could benefit from an increased understanding of any of the key topics?• Is there a particular challenge at work that you could apply your learnings to?
Knowledge	<p>The program presents an opportunity to learn about a huge range of innovative solutions for water, stormwater and wastewater management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there specific challenges in your current role that could be mitigated by the additional knowledge that can be gained through participation in the YWP program?• Are you able to facilitate a knowledge transfer event such as a lunch-and-learn where you could provide a presentation to colleagues that would provide further benefit to your organisation as a whole?• Is there specific manufacturers or a specific type of equipment or service that would assist you in your role if you were to see them in the trade exhibition (valves, pumps, tanks, membranes, instruments etc.)?• Could further exploration of a specific piece of equipment or service in the Trade Exhibition add value to your organisation through a deeper understanding of, and connection with, the supply chain?

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Business opportunities	<p>An interactive program is offered to encourage networking with a range of industry professionals. How can the opportunity to discover new business contacts benefit you in your role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you in a client-facing role where increasing your network increases your potential customer base?• Will increasing your network provide you with a bigger sounding board when trying to identify solutions to a particular problem you are facing or have recently faced?• Does increasing your network enhance your capacity to establish and leverage strategic partnerships to advance your business?• Can you think of a key business process or system that you could concentrate on at Ozwater and set out to identify one business improvement initiative that would provide the return on investment?
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This list is not exhaustive. Remember that your organisation will have values – a list of 3-5 words or short statements that the business uses to define their principles of operation. Commonly, these values include (or are some derivation of the theme of) integrity, accountability, innovation, collaboration, etc. Your ability to tangibly link your company's values to the outcomes will be instrumental in the decision-making process.

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OUTLINE THE EXPENSES

Remember, a few additional expenses come along with attending a conference, especially if you are flying interstate.

Before you can justify these expenses, it's time to work out what these expenses are. We've kick-started this process. Fill in or edit the below table template.

<i>SAMPLE EXPENSES TABLE</i>		
Expenses	Guidelines	Cost
Event Registration	Insert registration type	\$
Flight	Visit www.ozwater.org for Virgin flight discounts.	\$
Accommodation	Visit www.ozwater.org for accommodation discounts available at local Hotels.	\$
Transportation: from airport to hotel or office to venue	Taxi, bus, hire car	\$
Transportation: from venue to airport or office	Taxi, bus, hire car	\$
Parking and fuel	Provide an estimate.	\$
Food	Food at the conference is covered under your registration so include any dinner or breakfast costs that you may incur. Remember to check with your company whether this allowance is provided.	\$
SUBTOTAL	This is the total monetary investment sum you require to attend the program.	\$
Time	What will it cost your organisation in 'unproductive' time? This is an essential part of the equation as the benefit you return to your organisation must account for this expense.	\$
TOTAL	This is the total sum against which to calculate your return on investment.	\$

Investigate your organisation's training, business development and marketing budgets. If you position your justification appropriately, some part of the expenses above may be able to be transferred from these budgets.

Also, remember that depending on the total sum of the investment you are seeking, you may need to consider how much you are willing to fund yourself – acknowledging that your potential outlay will be in the later stages of this financial year and that self-education expenses are tax deductible.