



ATIA 2019 Conference Attendee Justification Toolkit

If you need to justify the expense and time commitment of attending the ATIA 2019 Conference to your employer or for a grant, here are some tips to help you present your case for support:

- Focus on what you will specifically bring back to your place of employment as a result of attending the conference.
- Before meeting with your supervisor or submitting a funding proposal, prepare a plan that shows who will cover your duties while you attend the conference.
- Offer to prepare and deliver a short presentation and Q&A session following the conference for your colleagues to share what you learned. This way, your coworkers will also receive the benefits of your attendance.
- If you are working to obtain or maintain a professional certification, remind your supervisor that this is a great way to earn continuing education units (CEUs), and is less expensive and less time consuming than registering for individual contact hour opportunities.

How to Justify Conference Attendance

Allocation of resources comes down to two things:

1. Expense (the “investment”)
2. Return on Investment (ROI)

The following provides some easy-to-use tools to help you calculate the investment for attending ATIA 2019 and will help to identify your return on investment.

Understanding and Determining Your Conference Expenses

Conference expenses are affected by a number of factors. Before you can justify your expenses, you need to calculate what they will be! To do so, feel free to use the *Expense Worksheet* provided as an addendum on page 4 to develop an estimate for attending the conference. Once you determine expenses, you can prepare to make a case for the return on the investment.

Understanding the Benefits

Let's face it, many benefits from conference attendance are hard to quantify. When you propose your attendance at the ATIA conference for supervisor approval, don't focus on how much you want to go; *focus on what you will specifically bring back to your organization as payback for the investment.*

Some specific details you'll need to identify include:

- **Education Sessions.** What sessions have particular relevance to you? Which do you think can teach you a skill, and/or help to overcome current or future challenges? Look at the breakout sessions that will be offered at the conference, provide examples of session titles, and be prepared to explain to your supervisor why you feel these sessions could benefit your organization.
 - Example 1
 - Example 2
 - Example 3
- **Exhibiting companies.** Which of our exhibiting companies will be demonstrating the products and/or services you use or could potentially use in the future? Is this an opportunity for you to compare competing products?
- **Continuing Education Units.** Although ATIA 2019 has not been officially approved for CEUs, ATIA will be applying for four types of CEUs: generic IACET CEUs and three specialist CEUs (ACVREP, AOTA, and ASHA). In general, 14-16 hours are offered for education sessions during the conference, and an additional 7 CEU hours for each day of pre-conference seminars. IACET & AOTA award 2.0 CEU hours, and ASHA & ACVREP award 1.5 CEU hours for 90-minute sessions respectively. *Specific hours awarded by providers will be available closer to the event.*

Quantifying the Benefits

Although YOU might understand the benefits of attending ATIA 2019, your supervisor may need more information. Therefore, to most effectively justify the conference, you need to clearly articulate the connection between your organization's needs and the conference program. Don't assume your supervisor will be able to automatically make those distinctions!

It's all in the Selling

To support this process, take time to identify and elaborate on the benefits of attending the ATIA 2019 Conference. After you have identified specific knowledge benefits, it's time to provide both the expenses and benefits to your supervisor to evaluate your proposition. Feel free to use the letter on the next page as a starting point to present your case!

Letter to Supervisor/Manager

<Date>

Dear <supervisor's name>,

I would like to attend the ATIA 2019 Annual Conference, taking place **January 29 – February 2, 2018** in Orlando, Florida. This conference is hosted by the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) and brings together leading AT practitioners and experts to provide education and the latest products and services. This is a unique professional development opportunity for me to attend a wide array of educational sessions that are directly applicable to my work, and to network with a variety of experts and colleagues from across the country.

Many of the presentations deliver information on how to **<list benefits to your responsibilities>**, and I am confident that what I learn at the ATIA 2019 conference will be directly applicable to my work at **<organization name>**. Specifically, by attending the conference, I will be able to gain the knowledge needed in order to better:

- Network with the experts in the field and other colleagues around the country
- Learn about and stay on top of the best practices and trends in assistive technology
- Discover and test drive products and services that enhance life for persons with disabilities

Not only will the techniques I learn be useful in my own work, my attendance at the conference will impact the overall prosperity of **<organization>** when I'm able to share what I learned with colleagues. Some of the sessions I think will be most impactful in my work are: **< You will need to insert the sessions that most apply to your responsibilities or to topics you have identified as challenges in your organization.>**

- Session 1
- Session 2
- Session 3
- Session 4
- Session 5

I am seeking sponsorship for the registration fee, travel expenses and living expenses during the conference. A detailed cost breakdown is listed below.

Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

- **Registration:** <\$xxxx>
- Round-trip Airfare (to and from Orlando International Airport): <\$xxxx>
- Transportation: <\$xxxx>
- **Hotel:** Caribe Royale (Single/Double: \$167/night; Villa: \$247/night): <\$xxxx>
- Meals: <\$xxxx>

The total investment for me to attend this conference is: <\$xxxx>.

The opportunity for me to develop better contacts and gain knowledge in specific areas makes my attendance at the ATIA 2019 conference a wise investment, which will result in improved service and a better understanding of practice for **<organization name>**. Please let me know if you have any questions, or would like more information on the ATIA 2019 Annual Conference.

Sincerely,

<your name here>

ADDENDUM: ATIA 2019 Expense Worksheet

Expense Areas and Guidelines	Cost
Conference Registration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before September 28: \$490 • September 29 – November 30: \$560 • December 1 - Onsite: \$585 	\$
Optional Pre-Conference Workshops/Seminars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-Day Pre-Conference Seminar (January 29-30, 2019): \$550 • One-Day Pre-Conference Seminar (January 30, 2019): \$325 	\$
Flight Visit a travel website to estimate your flight cost. We recommend flying into Orlando International Airport (MCO)	\$
Hotel – Caribe Royale Conference attendees receive a special rate of \$167 per room / per night at the Caribe Royale All Suites Hotel, plus taxes.	\$
Transportation to and from the Conference The Orlando International Airport is about a 20-minute drive from the conference venue. Here are a few transportation options to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel costs to and from your home to the airport • Shuttle: Mears Transportation offers shuttle service with an ATIA discount of \$37 round trip • Taxis: \$55 each way • Uber or Lyft: Approximately 	\$
Mileage Reimbursement Driving to the conference or to the airport for your flight? Use Google Maps to calculate distances, and then multiply the miles by 54.5 cents per mile (IRS standard 2018 rate).	\$
Meals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could include an approximate \$50-\$75 per day for meals • Conference lunch vouchers are available for \$17 per day to use at the Caribe Royale 	\$
Subtotal Per Person	\$
Total number of employees attending	
Total Cost	\$