



Request for proposal: Travel agent services

Introduction

IAS – the International AIDS Society – is seeking proposals from qualified travel agencies to provide travel booking and management services. The primary objective of this request for proposal is to identify a travel agency that can efficiently manage our travel requirements, ensuring cost effectiveness, excellent customer service, and compliance with our travel policy.

1. **Proposal submission deadline: 15 March 2024**
 - o No proposal will be considered after the above-mentioned deadline.
 - o Proposals must be submitted electronically.
 - o Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

2. Completed proposals should be submitted by email to:

Radka Serak
Manager, Membership and Learning
radka.serak@iasociety.org



Request for proposal

The request for proposal consists of the following sections:

- I. About IAS – the International AIDS Society – and its conferences
- II. IAS travel needs: General information and timeline
- III. Scope of services
- IV. Proposal submission requirements and guidelines



I. About IAS – the International AIDS Society – and its conferences

IAS – the International AIDS Society

The IAS convenes, educates and advocates for a world in which HIV no longer presents a threat to public health and individual well-being. After the emergence of HIV and AIDS, concerned scientists created the IAS to bring together experts from across the world and disciplines to promote a concerted HIV response. Today, the IAS and its members unite scientists, policy makers and activists to galvanize the scientific response, build global solidarity and enhance human dignity for all those living with and affected by HIV. The IAS also hosts the world's most prestigious HIV conferences: the International AIDS Conference, the IAS Conference on HIV Science and the HIV Research for Prevention Conference. For further information, visit www.iasociety.org.

The International AIDS Conference

The International AIDS Conference is the premier global platform to advance the HIV response. As the world's largest conference on HIV and AIDS, it sits uniquely at the intersection of science, advocacy and human rights, bringing together scientists, policy makers, healthcare professionals, people living with HIV, funders, media and communities. Since its start in 1985, the conference has served as an opportunity to strengthen policies and programmes that ensure an evidence-based response to HIV and related epidemics. An estimated 15,000 participants from around the world will attend AIDS 2024, and the great majority will do so in person.

AIDS 2024, the 25th International AIDS Conference, will take place in Munich, Germany, and virtually from 22 to 26 July 2024, with pre-conference meetings being held on 20 and 21 July 2024.

AIDS 2026, the 26th International AIDS Conference, will take place in a large city in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The HIV Research for Prevention Conference

The HIV Research for Prevention Conference is the only global scientific conference focused exclusively on the challenging and fast-growing field of HIV prevention research. This conference fosters interdisciplinary knowledge exchange on HIV vaccines, microbicides, PrEP, treatment as prevention and biomedical interventions, as well as their social and behavioural implications.

HIVR4P 2024, the 5th HIV Research for Prevention Conference, will take place in Lima, Peru, and virtually from 6 to 10 October 2024 and is expected to bring together around 1,500 participants.

The IAS Conference on HIV Science

The IAS Conference on HIV Science is the world's most influential meeting on HIV research and its applications. This biennial conference presents the critical advances in basic, clinical and operational HIV research that move science into policy and practice. Through its open and inclusive programme, the meeting sets the gold standard of HIV science, featuring highly diverse and cutting-edge research.

IAS 2025, the 13th IAS Conference on HIV Science, will take place on the African continent in July 2025.

II. IAS travel needs: General information and timeline

The IAS has 75 staff members based in Geneva and works closely with consultants and board members, such as members of the Governing Council, who are based internationally. Most of the flights to be booked are for people who are not part of the IAS, but whom the IAS supports to attend conferences, such as scholarship recipients. These are all international flights and need to be booked in a short period as most people need to apply for visas. Most scholarship recipients are based in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia.

The information below provides an overview of IAS requirements, booking volume and timeline for a given year. Please note that this information is an estimate and is subject to change. For example, in 2024, the IAS expects to book approximately 1,400 flights (the majority in economy class).

Overview of indicative yearly timeline and estimated flight booking needs

Meeting	Destination	Event dates	Date of booking	Traveller category	Estimated number of flights	Total bookings
HIVR4P site visit	Lima	March 2024	November 2023	IAS staff	10	10
AIDS 2024 Marathon Meeting	Munich	18-21 March 2024	January 2024	IAS staff	10	10
HIVR4P Marathon Meeting	Lima	May 2024	January 2024	IAS staff	6	6
AIDS 2024	Munich	20-26 July 2024	January 2024	IAS staff	70	1,010
			May 2024	Governing Council members	40	
			April 2024	Scholarships	800	
			March 2024	Scholarship recipients	100	
IAS 2025 Programme and Conference Coordinating Committee meetings	Africa	November 2024	September 2024	IAS staff	15	45
				Committee members	30	

HIVR4P 2024	Lima	6-10 October 2024	April 2024	IAS staff	25	225
			June 2024	Scholarships	200	
IAS 2025 meeting	Africa	November 2024	May 2024	IAS staff	6	6
Governing Council retreat	Geneva	December 2024	September 2024	Governing Council members	25	25
IAS Educational Fund	Multiple	All year round		IAS partners	40	40
Miscellaneous	Multiple	All year round		IAS staff	50	50

IAS travel booking procedures

Please be aware that these procedures may vary between departments:

A. For scholarship and change maker flights (accounting for most flights to be booked)

- The IAS Scholarship team provides the agency with a preliminary list of the scholarship recipients and change makers, including their names, addresses, countries of residence and passport numbers, highlighting those who should be prioritized for booking.
 - Note: If feasible, the travel agent may offer an online form for the IAS to collect necessary flight booking data.*
- Utilizing this list, the travel agent initiates contact with scholarship recipients via email, proposing two itineraries that adhere to the stipulated IAS travel policy and budget. The responsible IAS team is always copied in the email exchanges.
- Before confirming the flight, the travel agent ensures that the traveller's personal information is accurate (passport name, address, passport number, issue date and expiry date).
- If the traveller declines the provided quotes, the travel agent tries to identify alternative offers based on the reasons for refusal.
- Once the itinerary is approved by the traveller (or by the responsible IAS team if the cost exceeds the approved budget), the e-ticket confirmation will be sent via email.
- Any changes to the expected travel arrangements or issued e-tickets must be communicated and approved by the responsible IAS team. This includes changes to travel dates, costs, locations and recipients.
- The travel agent is responsible for charging the expenses to the appropriate budget line, according to the information provided by the responsible IAS team.
- As the majority of scholarship recipients and change makers need to apply for visas to travel to the conference, the timing of booking flights is tight. The majority of flights for this group (600-700 flights) have to be booked in a three-week window between early April and mid-late April.

General travel booking terms

- Luggage: One piece of checked luggage must be included.
- Class and refund policy: Tickets should be booked in the lowest available changeable and refundable economy class (as opposed to economy plus or equivalent).
- Budget: The budget allocation for each flight is determined based on an established list of average prices for return flights per country of residence, serving as a reference. The maximum budget is set at the average price plus an additional buffer. If a flight offer exceeds



this maximum, the responsible IAS team should be notified for approval. The supplier will be required and responsible for establishing a list of average flight prices.

B. For Governing Council and Executive Board members

Air travel shall be undertaken in economy class, except in the following cases:

1. Travellers who wish to upgrade their tickets at their own cost or using their frequent flyer miles/points can use an upgradable economy booking class.
2. Flights to the annual Governing Council retreat may be booked in business class for longer journeys.
3. All flights for the IAS President where the journey exceeds certain travel duration may be booked in business class.

C. For IAS staff and third parties

Air travel should be undertaken in economy class. Flight bookings must be done via the IAS travel agency platform. If travel arrangements are not made by the IAS, such travel will be reimbursed based on the quote for a comparable journey with a reasonable itinerary provided to the IAS by its appointed travel agent, whichever quote is the lowest. Individual preferences for specified carriers cannot be accepted if they result in more expensive journeys.

When choosing a flight, the lowest airfare quoted for the itinerary that best suits the trip objective is expected to be taken. Such an itinerary may take into consideration aspects such as the total length of the trip, number and length of stopovers, and transit requirements at stopover destinations.

To reduce costs, the purchase of restricted tickets is recommended, even if it may involve possible penalties for changes. NGO fares, if more expensive, should be booked only when additional flexibility is required. In any case, the balance between price and flexibility should be considered when choosing the ticket type. The choice should be explained when seeking travel approval.



III. Scope of services

Travel booking and reservation management

- Arrange domestic and international air travel, including economy and business bookings.

Travel policy compliance and reporting

- Ensure compliance with our organization's travel policy guidelines.
- Generate regular reports on travel expenses, including cost breakdowns by category.

Travel support and customer service

- Provide travel services during working days (covering at least our office core working hours: 09:00-18:00 CET).
- Provide a 24/7 helpline for emergency assistance and travel-related issues, as well as services during weekends and official holidays.
- Offer dedicated support for itinerary changes, cancellations and re-bookings.

Negotiation and management of supplier contracts

- Negotiate favourable rates with airlines (group booking whenever possible).

Technology solutions

- Provide access to an advanced travel management system for booking, tracking and reporting purposes.
- System must allow booking, travel approval and budget allocation.
- Offer mobile applications or platforms for convenient traveller access.

Please ensure that your proposal addresses these services comprehensively, demonstrating your agency's capabilities in each of these areas.

IV. Proposal submission requirements and guidelines

Interested travel agencies should submit a proposal in English that includes the following detailed information:

1. **Travel agency overview**
 - o Describe the office location(s), employee numbers and history of the travel agency.
 - o Outline experience relevant for this proposal in providing organization travel management services.
2. **Project team details**
 - o Who is your key account manager?
 - o How many people make up your team and where are they located?
 - o What other languages can your team members communicate in?
3. **Service approach**
 - o Describe in detail how the agency plans to provide the scope of services, including any specific details about resources dedicated to the project, tools used or any other information you consider important.
4. **Booking services**
 - o Can you provide a periodic cost overview of the main routes for the dates of IAS conferences?
 - o Describe your offline booking process, including location and hours of operation.
 - o Detail after-hours service availability for the IAS, including location and hours of operation.
 - o How can IAS focal points contact booking agents? And how many agents would be assigned to IAS bookings?
 - o How do you manage periods of high demand?
 - o Can you send the travel booking itinerary for each traveller to the IAS too?
 - o Can you provide a detailed overview of booked travel itineraries for specific groups?
 - o Can you send SMS or WhatsApp notifications to our travellers?
5. **Online booking tool**
 - o Do you offer an online booking tool?
 - o Can travellers make direct bookings via your platform?
 - o Does your online booking platform include features like quoting and approval systems, integration of specific processes (such as budget codes and approvals), booking management and reporting? Do you provide online support?
 - o Is your online system customizable to align with our organizational needs and travel policy?
 - o Can the online booking form be used to collect traveller data?
 - o How do you ensure the privacy of traveller data?
 - o Can you provide a mobile application? And what features does it offer?
6. **Invoicing and reporting**
 - o Describe the technology platform and reporting capabilities offered.
 - o Explain how detailed monthly, quarterly and annual reports will be made available.



- Can you provide a weekly/bi-weekly summary of all travel activity data? This should include trips and travellers, travel locations, dates, mode of transport, carriers used, costs and fees, cancellations and refunds.
- 7. Cost proposal in USD**
- Provide a clear breakdown of pricing structure, including any management fees or commissions and taxes for bookings, cancellations, re-bookings/changes.
 - How do you ensure access to the best fares in the market?
 - Note that all invoices must be issued in USD as per the USD prices agreed upon in the contract. Payment will be made in USD via international bank transfer.
- 8. Emergency management**
- Outline the agency's procedures for handling emergencies and disruptions.
 - What is your process for managing and resolving issues, including response times from team members?
 - Is 24-hour support, including on weekends and public holidays, provided? Detail any associated costs or procedures.
 - How are travellers assisted in emergencies?
 - What is your contingency plan in case of a significant disruption to operations (such as loss of access to premises)?
- 9. Compliance with travel policy**
- How does the agency ensure compliance with client-specific travel policies?
- 10. Visa services**
- Do you offer visa service assistance for travellers, including guidance on visa requirements and end-to-end support as needed?
- 11. References**
- Provide contact information for at least three current or past clients with similar needs to the IAS who can serve as references.
- 12. Ethical provider policy**
- Can you confirm that your company actively opposes and does not engage in discriminatory workplace practices, encompassing real or perceived factors, such as HIV status, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, family or caregiver responsibilities, pregnancy, religion or political beliefs that may adversely affect individuals living with HIV?
 - Please provide contact information for two references who can attest to your company's commitment to non-discriminatory workplace policies.
- 13. Other**
- How many airlines do you collaborate with, and what regions do they cover?
 - Can airline miles be accumulated through your bookings, particularly for IAS staff flights?
 - Can you apply fare discounts (if applicable)?
 - Is it possible to book train/bus tickets through your agency?



- How will you provide access to records of all travel bookings for monitoring CO₂ emissions and enabling offsetting?
- 14. Travel costs estimations**
 - Please provide a quote for the most competitive economy fare currently available to you for the flights in the following Excel sheet (ensure that all columns are filled): [Flight quotes \(to download\)](#)
- 15. Future developments**
 - What developments do you anticipate in the next 24-36 months that will enhance your travel programme?
- 16. Proposal submission deadline: 15 March 2024**
 - No proposal will be considered after the above-mentioned deadline.
 - Proposals must be submitted electronically.
 - Incomplete proposals will not be considered.
- 17. Completed proposals should be submitted in English by email to:

Radka Serak
Manager, Membership and Learning
radka.serak@iasociety.org

- 18. Your proposal must be compliant with the rules, regulations, various union labour requirements in the jurisdictions applicable for the services.
- 19. Upon receipt, all complete proposals will be evaluated. Shortlisted companies will be contacted to further develop their proposals via a remote interview, and additional information or clarifications may be requested via email.

Please supply any further information on your offer that could be relevant or impact the pricing structure or the organization of the services.

Important note:

The IAS is not obliged to award the travel agent contract for any service to one single supplier.