



World Health Assembly Official Side events 18-22 May 2026

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR SIDE-EVENTS – GUIDELINES

Background

The Seventy ninth World Health Assembly will be convened in Geneva from 18-22 May 2026. Due to ongoing renovations at the Palais des Nations, it will be co-located at the Palais and at the WHO Headquarters.

The WHO Secretariat invites Member States, Observers and non-State actors in Official Relations with the WHO, to submit proposals to organize a limited number of Official Side Events during the Health Assembly.

Such side events are an opportunity for Member States and global health stakeholders to:

- Showcase collaborative efforts, transformative actions and innovations to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes;
- Amplify the themes and issues being discussed at the World Health Assembly, in alignment with the six strategic objectives of the [14th Global Programme of Work of WHO](#): i) respond to climate change, an escalating health threat; ii) address determinants of health and root causes of ill health; iii) advance the primary healthcare approach and essential health system capacities for universal health coverage; iv) improve health service coverage and financial protection; v) prevent, mitigate and prepare for health risks from all hazards; vi) rapidly detect and sustain response to health emergencies; and
- Announce commitments to deliver on the GPW14.

Format

- The Official Side Events will take place from Monday 18 May - Friday 22 May at the World Health Organization Headquarters in Geneva.
- To ensure a balanced and equitable distribution of events, approximately 45 slots will be attributed among Member States, Observers and non-State Actors, depending on room availability confirmations. United Nations Agencies may partner with other organizers.
- Proposed times:
 - Lunchtime: 13:00-14:30
 - Evening: 18:00- 19:30

Criteria for Side Event selection

In view of the large number of requests anticipated and taking into consideration the limited space and time allocated for the Official Side Events, the Secretariat will consider side event proposals with the following criteria when conducting the selection:

- Side event proposals should involve:
 - WHO Member States (from at least three regions); or
 - WHO Member States (from at least two regions) and at least one UN entity and/or relevant Intergovernmental Organization; or

- Non-State actors in official relations (at least two) with relevant work globally and at least one Member State; or
 - Non-State actors in official relations (at least three) with relevant work in the topics proposed for side-events.
- Side-events taking place at the WHO Headquarters may be held in a hybrid format.
 - The lead organizers for any proposal should clearly identify themselves. Member States may co-organize a side event or co-sponsor a side event, which is organized by other stakeholders.
 - Side event proposals should include a diversity of voices, from government, international organizations, civil society, youth and other relevant stakeholders. Proposals that demonstrate a multi-stakeholder, gender-balanced and intergenerational approach will be given priority.
 - Side events proposed should clearly indicate their contributions to one or more themes of the GPW14, or address an unmet and/or critical need, which represents a significant public health burden, demonstrated by links to WHO's reported global burden of disease data, and stimulate discussions towards integrated interventions, versus aim to propose vertical approaches. Country-focused events should aim to broaden their approaches to consider other countries facing similar challenges.
 - Side events may be conducted in any of the six official WHO languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese). If interpretation is desired, it shall be organized through the Secretariat and it will be paid for by side event organizers (more information on cost-recovery further below).
 - If two or more side event applications are received on a similar theme, the organizers may be asked to merge their proposals and resubmit it to allow due consideration. Applicants showing flexibility will have better chances to make a successful bid.
 - All side event proposals submitted by the deadline will be considered equally (not first come first served).

Application process

- To submit your side event proposal, you will be required to complete all the sections of the online application form. The application process closed **at the end of February 2026. All submissions must be provided in English.**
- Entities should coordinate internally to ensure only one application is made per organizing entity. The lead organizing entity(ies) should be clearly identified. The WHO Secretariat will be in touch only with the lead organizing entities regarding the organization of the event.
- Applications will require the names and contact details of the relevant focal points of the organizing entities. WHO Member States are encouraged to apply through their Missions to the United Nations in Geneva, where appropriate.

Cost-recovery mechanism for side events

WHO will recover from the organizers the following costs incurred in the context of the organization and hosting of side events:

Mandatory fees:

- A standard processing fee of CHF 500 will apply to each selected event.
- Room costs for events may range from CHF 1 500 to CHF 2 500 and will depend on the size of the room. This rate will include the costs of the room, audiovisual support, shuttle services from WHO to the Palais des Nations, and a package of up to 50 special badges for each side event. Details will be provided in the application form.

Optional fees (upon expression of interest in the application form):

- Hybrid events may be held at the WHO Headquarters for a package fee of CHF 600 (i.e. zoom connection and integrated captioning).
- Interpretation fees are detailed in the application form.
- Webstreaming and catering are supplemental services to be arranged separately through the WHO Secretariat, upon confirmation of an event slot. Webstreaming will only be available at the WHO Headquarters.

Once an application has been accepted by the Secretariat, an invoice will be issued to the event organizer, requesting confirmation and advance payment of the full package fee to WHO within a given time window. Cost-sharing is possible among co-organizers and **shall not include the WHO Secretariat**. This is outlined in the application form, and once the organizers sign it, they are confirming that this is also their understanding.

Selection process

- The Secretariat will identify selected Side Events, based on the above-mentioned criteria while ensuring regional and thematic balance. Organizers will be informed of the successful applications in the second half of March 2026/ at the latest in early April 2026.
- Following the selection of the proposals, the Secretariat will assign a meeting room and a timeslot for each approved event, looking for a thematic and regional balance. The Secretariat will not engage in swapping slots. Nonetheless, organizers of different events interested in swapping slots may contact the Secretariat to confirm a swapping arrangement, copying the organizers of both events once mutual agreement is reached. In such a case, the Secretariat will update the schedule. Should such a swapping arrangement not be feasible considering interpretation services schedules, the Secretariat reserves the right to decline this arrangement.
- The selected Official Side Events will be listed on the GBS webpage and included in the official list of meetings for the World Health Assembly that will be posted on the Governing Bodies website.
- Successful applicants will have until end March 2026 to confirm their continued interest in holding an Official Side Event by paying the required fee (indicated in the application form) and confirming in writing to sarkisr@who.int that the payment has been made. If not done, the slot will not be confirmed and the Secretariat may reallocate the slot to another event. Regarding interpretation needs, upon final confirmation by end of March, the Secretariat will proceed and book the teams (availability is limited). Once the teams are booked, it is not possible to cancel the booking.

Final information to be added to the Official Side Events programme shall be shared by 1 May 2026. Only minor changes should be made to the proposal once the selection process is complete and successful applicants notified.

Responsibilities for Side Event organizers

- Side Event organizers (excluding the WHO Secretariat) will be responsible for covering the full fees for the event, which are payable to the WHO Secretariat, including any additional services requested by the organizers. This excludes catering, which is payable directly to catering services. After confirmation of the event and payment of the event fees, the Secretariat may put the organizers in touch with the catering services.
- Interpretation needs to be requested through the application form given limited availability, and it will involve a fee that depends on the number of languages requested, and that is not included in the room fee. Organizers must pay for interpretation service requested within the requested timeline. The WHO Secretariat is not involved in paying such fees, including through its technical divisions.
- The Side Event co-organizers' responsibilities include – but are not limited to – the invitation and travel arrangements for speakers including visa and security clearance, as needed; the “run of show”, checking the registration status of speakers and ensuring the moderation of the session/event, including strict time management. Events that start late will not be extended past the start time of formal Governing Bodies meetings, or within 30 minutes before the start of the next meeting.
- Side Event organizers are responsible for promoting their events through their respective online and social media channels.
- It is the responsibility of the organizers of Side Events to ensure that all organizers, speakers, attendees and supporting staff are duly registered to attend the World Health Assembly. The Secretariat will provide a package of up to 50 special badges per event. Those participants that are already invited to the Health Assembly and have an access badge should not use such special badges.
- Side Event organizers are not permitted to set up displays or put posters on meeting room walls during the event or at any other time during the Health Assembly to avoid removal and loss of their materials. Roll-up banners and flyers may be made available by the organizers and should be removed promptly at the end of the event. There will be more flexibility for events held at the WHO Headquarters.

Role played by WHO

The WHO Secretariat is not a co-organizer of Official Side Events, and as such does not participate in cost-sharing for the events. However, if requested by Member States and pending the availability of resources, the Secretariat can provide technical advice relating to the area of focus of the event. The WHO Secretariat also provides an official banner for WHA79 events, which can be used to promote the events. The WHO logo can otherwise not be used for the Official Side Events.

The WHO Secretariat cannot be involved in financing the organization of side events either at the Palais or outside of the Palais des Nations nor pay for travel expenses of speakers invited to side events.

Timeline:

- 7 February 2026 Launch of the application process for side-events
- End February 2026 Deadline to submit applications for side-events
- End of March/early April 2026 slot proposals sent by WHO Secretariat
- End March 2026/early April 2026: (or four working days after reception of the confirmation): deadline for confirmation of the slot and services required by the organizer (interpretation, etc)
- Seven working days after reception of the invoice: deadline for payments (noting that WHO is not involved in co-financing events), noting that events are fully confirmed upon payment of the invoice
- Mid-April: release of the list of side events
- Upon payment of the fees, event preparation guidelines will be shared with the organizers, as well as a form to indicate preferences with regards to room set-up
- 1 May 2026 Deadline for selected side event organizers to submit requested information to be added to the side events programme
- May 2026 Official Side events of the World Health Assembly

Outreach

- The list of WHA meetings will publish the titles, organizing partners, brief description, focal point and webpage link for each event. This list is only available in English language. Organizers are welcome to set up an event webpage where interested participants find more information regarding their event. It is the responsibility of the organizers to provide additional information on their own webpage.
- Organizers of Official Side Events may refer to WHA79 for outreach purposes and may use the dedicated WHA79 Official Side Events banner that will be distributed, but please note that the use of the WHO emblem, logo, or name is not permitted. WHO is not a co-organizer and is not responsible for the event content. Please avoid suggesting any affiliation with WHO in your promotional materials.

Further information

Please visit the Governing Bodies website for access to the outcomes of the process: [WHO | Governance](#)

For any queries on side event matters that are not addressed in the Side Event Guidelines, please consult the WHO Secretariat at: hggoverningbodies@who.int