CALL FOR
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
TO HOST THE BLUE SHIELD

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2026

Attendees at Shielding the Past, General Assembly and Conference 2024
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BLUE SHIELD International

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Blue Shield Board invites expressions of interest from its member[1] national committees, prospective national committees, nominated representatives, or countries seeking to found a national committee, to host the 2026 General Assembly, Conference and Training Workshops. The event takes place during July in a city selected through a competitive process.

1.1. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY & CONFERENCE / TRAINING EVENT

The Blue Shield General Assembly 2026 will be a major cultural heritage protection event, which will offer opportunities to:

- explore highly topical issues and key trends of interest to the field, with a curated programme of exceptional speakers, panels, and open discussions, open to all those interested in cultural heritage protection in crisis
- connect with all those working in heritage protection in crisis from heritage protection, humanitarian, and uniformed sectors, including armed forces and emergency responders
- take part in training/workshops for Blue Shield members
- discover the culture of another country through cultural activities and tours
- interact with international and local vendors and suppliers bringing the latest technology/services to the field in cultural heritage protection and response before, during, and after crisis
- join fellow Blue Shield members, National Committees, the Board, and the secretariat, to attend meetings, working sessions and address required agenda items (*Members only)*

1.2. BECOMING THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The prospective hosts should establish an Organising Committee, made up of representatives of the national committee, or those intending to form one and partners (such as professional conference organisers, or host venues, e.g., universities).

Those wishing to host the General Assembly should read this Information Pack and complete the Application Form (Annex B), and supporting documentation as required (e.g. Annex C).

On successful selection to host, the Organising Committee will enter into a formal Hosting Agreement with the Blue Shield, represented by its international Board: this will set out the partnership role in the event, the responsibilities of the Organising Committee, the provisions they undertake to provide for the event, and placement of any potential share of any surplus from the event. A draft of the Hosting Agreement is in Annex D: the agreement may be modified as needed to reflect the agreed provisions of the event.

[1] For definitions of members, prospective members, and other bodies named in the EoI, see Annex A.

Those taking on the organisation of the General Assembly will partner with the Blue Shield Board to host the event and will be offered support from the secretariat (see Section 4 for division of responsibilities). The event, along with the host city, receives significant international and online promotion, increasing global awareness of the importance of cultural heritage protection, the city, and the surrounding region. The Blue Shield International secretariat and Secretary of the Board work closely with the Organising Committee to develop the event. The Blue Shield Board approves the content of the event programme, which will include topics of relevance to cultural heritage protection field, and which must adhere to the Blue Shield's ethical principles and core values.[2]

Blue Shield's Board is the overall decision-making body for the event. Blue Shield is wholly responsible for the content of the Congress programme. Topics will be of relevance to culture and CPP and may include but not limited to human rights, religion, sexuality and gender, and indigenous matters.

1.3. SELECTION PROCESS

Blue Shield issues a call for expressions of interest on 6 May 2025.

The Application Form (Annex B) with all required information must be submitted by Board Secretary Anna Puhr (anna.puhr@icloud.com) **by 20 June 2025**. Please include in the email subject field "Confidential – Blue Shield General Assembly 2026 Expression of Interest".

Submissions will be reviewed by the Blue Shield secretariat staff for completeness and if necessary, clarification may be sought on some details.

A preliminary list of candidates from submissions that meet the criteria will be provided by the secretariat to the Blue Shield Board. The Blue Shield Board will review them in its July meeting and will make its decision regarding the host, based on the criteria and the information provided by each candidate. Preference will be given to established National Committees, followed by those already in the process of founding a committee, and then those who intend to do so.

All candidates will be advised following the meeting whether they have been successful or not. The Board will commence business arrangements and planning with the successful Organising Committee. The Organising Committee are expected to sign the Hosting Agreement **by Friday 26 September 2025.**

The event is expected to be held in July 2026; however, this can be modified in discussion with the Board.

[2] *Ethics and Principles*, and *core values*: see https://theblueshield.org/about-us/approach-ethics-and-principles/ and *What is the Blue Shield* brochure https://theblueshield.org/about-us/what-is-the-blue-shield/

If you need any clarification of the EOI process, please send an email to Board Secretary Anna Puhr (anna.puhr@icloud.com), and copy in the secretariat point of contact, Emma Cunliffe (emma.cunliffe@blueshield-international.org) with "Blue Shield GA 2026 Expression of Interest QUERY" in the subject field and they will respond to you.

2. ORGANISING THE EVENT

2.1. DELEGATES

It is expected that the conference will attract 80-100 members of the Blue Shield members, from 20-30 different countries.

We actively encourage the organisers to seek wider attendance from those in the cultural heritage sector, including those in our partner organisations (ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA and ICA); armed forces and other uniformed responders; and those in the humanitarian sector – all of whom work to the common goal of heritage protection in crisis. The event will be widely disseminated on the professional networks and social media of the Blue Shield International, national committees and partner organisations.

2.2. BUDGET AND FUNDING

The event budget should be generated from

- delegate registration fee,
- exhibition sales (if planned),
- and sponsorship, industry as well as government support.

To maximise attendance, delegate attendance fees for Blue Shield members and prospective members must not exceed €150 for a three-day event. Additional events, such as cultural events, must be priced and ticketed separately.

Part of the bid should outline the funding and subventions available from government, tourism and conference organisations to support the event. The Blue Shield Board will also strive to find funding to assist in the organisation of the General Assembly.

A minimum budget of €30,000 is anticipated.

The event brings income to the host city with delegates spending on transport, accommodation and food and beverages. As far as possible these funds are spent on local services, rather than being transferred out of the host country. The event venue and audio/visual technical services make up a significant part of the costs. The Organising Committee is responsible for managing the event budget; however, it must be approved by the Blue Shield Board.

2.3. TIMING SCHEDULE FOR SELECTION PROCESS

	Action	Timeframe
Phase 1	EOI to (prospective) National Committees	6 May 2025
	Application submission deadline	**20 June 2025**
Phase 2	Further information sought from short-listed candidates	30 June 2025
	Detailed information required	20 July 2025
Phase 3	Decision made by Blue Shield Board	31 July 2025
	Candidates advised of Board decision	August 2025
	Hosting agreement and Legal agreements prepared with host association, venue and suppliers	September 2025
	Hosting agreement signed	**26 September 2025**
Confirmation and Announcement of the location for Blue Shield General Assembly 2026		***End of September 2025***

3. CONTENT OF THE EVENT

3.1. EVENT PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

The event should be at least 3 days. It must include (as a minimum):

- A dedicated venue with spaces to meet, connect, and network to share experience
- An opening session with keynote presentation and welcome speeches
  - Open: wide attendance is encouraged
  - Must be hybrid with the option for virtual audience participation

- A two (2) day exploration of highly topical issues and key trends of interest to the field, with a curated programme of speakers, panels, and open discussions, open to all those interested in cultural heritage protection in crisis:
    - Open: wide attendance is encouraged
    - Ideally, sessions should be hybrid with the option for virtual audience participation
- A half (1/2) day training/workshop session, to be run by the Blue Shield Board (this may be concurrent with the main sessions (above):
    - Closed: for Blue Shield members only
    - This can be in person (not hybrid)
- A day devoted to the Blue Shield including:
    - Presentations by national committees worldwide (open to all)
        - Session/s to allow presentations by the national committee on an aspect of interest to the wider CHP community
        - There are currently 34 national committees and 8 more under construction
        - This is estimated to need approximately 5 hours depending on length allocated (presentations should be time limited)
        - Open: wide attendance is encouraged
        - Ideally hybrid with the option for virtual audience participation
    - The Blue Shield General Assembly Business Meeting (3 hours)
        - Closed: for Blue Shield members or prospective members[3] only, or those the Blue Shield Bureau chooses to invite
        - Electronic and remote voting should be possible
        - Must be hybrid with the option for virtual audience participation
- Hosts should facilitate a meeting of the newly elected Board and previous Board
- A conference dinner, which should be free for all Blue Shield Members
- A cultural / “ice-breaker” / networking event

We encourage the event to contain:

- Accompanying poster speakers highlighting cultural heritage protection activities and new research underlining current issues and trends
- An exhibition of international and local vendors and suppliers bringing the latest technology and services to the field in cultural heritage protection and response before, during, and after crisis
- Social events which are to be separate ticketed events, to be decided in collaboration with the national Organising Committee

[3] The Blue Shield Articles of Association (2016) define National Committees Under Construction as Prospective Members.

- Hosts might also facilitate workshops / breakout groups to discuss issues of importance to national committees to feed back to the Blue Shield Board on matters of importance to the association

3.2. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

1. All Members of the association (i.e., all National Committees, and the Founding organisations) must be invited (Article 5.2).
2. Representatives of National Committees under development, National Correspondents, representatives of other related organisations, and other individuals may be invited by the Bureau (Article 5.4).
3. The hosts must arrange for voting on matters of interest to the General Assembly (Art.5.1), including arrangement of proxy votes (article 5.2), in coordination with the Secretary of the Board and secretariat.
4. 2026 is an election year. Voting for elections must be conducted by secret ballot (Art.6.6).
5. All arrangements for voting and matters on the agenda should be coordinated with the Secretary and secretariat to ensure regulatory compliance.

3.3. OBLIGATIONS OF THE HOST

The host must provide:

1. Finance / Funding

i. Hosts will be expected to raise funds to financially support the General Assembly, subsidising
   - Venue
   - Accommodation (e.g., pre-arranged hotel discount codes)
   - Technical requirements (presentation equipment, photography, and videography)
   - Conference materials
   - Catering (see 3., below)
   - Attendance by Members of the Blue Shield (member registration fees are capped, see 2.3).

ii. **If possible**, financial contributions should be made to enable attendance by at least one representative from each national committee and national committee under construction in a low-income country (following World Bank Classifications[4]).

[4] World Bank Classifications:
https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups
National Committees and National Committees Under Construction:
https://theblueshield.org/what-we-do/national-committees-around-the-globe/

The Blue Shield Board and secretariat do not host a separate bank account for the event. The Organising Committee will be responsible for the financial management and banking of the event: the Blue Shield Board will conduct Due Diligence checks on the financial management practices of potential hosts to ensure regulatory compliance is observed.

2. Venue Requirements

A venue capable of hosting at least 100 delegates of the Blue Shield, with:

i. Space for delegate registration
ii. Presentation facilities, including stage or lectern, screens for PPTs, roving microphones for Q&A.
iii. At least one parallel room for the Business Meeting and for the closed training/workshop session
iv. Space for refreshments and networking, including water for speakers
v. A venue for the Conference Dinner
vi. A venue for a social ice-breaker evening
vii. Facilities for simultaneous translation (preferred)
viii. Fully accessible provisions for additional needs
ix. Internet available
x. Air-conditioning / heating
xi. Smaller breakout rooms (*optional*)
xii. An exhibition hall for sponsors and vendors (*optional*), with
    - electricity / plugs for each vendor/ sponsor
    - tables and chairs
xiii. A space for poster presentations (*optional*).

3. Catering

Must include:

i. 2 x breaktime refreshments each day
ii. An ice-breaker / networking social event (free for Blue Shield members)
iii. A conference dinner for all delegates (free for Blue Shield members).

4. Translation (optional but encouraged)

i. Provision for simultaneous translation into French, Spanish and the national language is strongly encouraged.

5. Conference Materials

i. Conference packs, including printed programmes, etc.
ii. Delegate badges
iii. Conference website (optional); (can be hosted on the Blue Shield International website by the secretariat in English only).

If you have concerns about meeting any of these requirements, please contact Board Secretary Anna Puhr (anna.puhr@icloud.com), and copy in the secretariat point of contact, Emma Cunliffe (emma.cunliffe@blueshield-international.org) with "Blue Shield GA 2026 Expression of Interest QUERY" in the subject field and they will respond to you.

4. OUTLINE OF DIVISION OF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. BLUE SHIELD BOARD

Blue Shield's Board retains the right of overall governance and financial management responsibility for its General Assembly. This includes:

- the decision on the location, host and site for each event.
- the decisions about the structure and content of the event, ensuring that it appropriately reflects Blue Shield's values and 'brand'.
- Responsibility to ensure regulatory compliance as per the Articles of Association (see 4.2).

The Blue Shield Board is generally represented by the Secretary and/or their representative ion the secretariat.

4.2. BLUE SHIELD SECRETARIAT

The Blue Shield secretariat provides advice and some support to the Organising Committee. Their main responsibilities for the event include:

- Management of governance & compliance requirements delegated by the Blue Shield Board
- Management of the Blue Shield General Assembly Business Meeting during the event
- Coordination of the event programme
- Financial oversight of the budget together with the Board
- Support to the event selection process
- Support to planning meetings
- Support with delegate registrations
- Advertisement on the Blue Shield website and social media
- International promotion
- Post event survey
- Liaison with the Blue Shield Board and the Organising Committee on event matters
- Support to the Organising Committee with event setup

4.3. ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The Organising Committee is the organising body of the Blue Shield association contracted by the Blue Shield Board to provide services to the Blue Shield General assembly. Its membership includes as wide as possible representation from the whole heritage protection community.
The main responsibilities include:

- Recruit national, regional and local government sponsorship or incentives and obtain grants
- Follow sound financial management practices in event management
- Arrange a suitable (and accessible) venue as described under 3.3(2)
- Arrange the programme in coordination with the secretariat, liaising with the Blue Shield Board and secretariat on matters relating to regulatory compliance, training workshop, and the General Assembly Business Meeting.
- Registration management in coordination with the secretariat
- Organise host country invitation letters and visa application assistance when required, liaising with embassies and consulates
- Seek discounted accommodation for attendees
- Arrange catering
- Arrange photography and videography
- Provision of technical support for hybrid event
- Arrange event delegate packs and signage for the event
- Co-host the event, including set up and post-event tidying
- Ensure adequate risk management, security and first aid for events (with venues, or independently) is in place
- Management of event volunteers (recruitment, allocation of tasks, liaison during event etc.)
- Contribute content to event promotional materials and promote the event, in coordination with the secretariat
- Liaise with local authorities.

Optional responsibilities:

- Organise cultural events (ensuring risk management, security and first aid are in place)
- Organise poster board construction and on-site management
- Coordinate with the secretariat on potential local sponsors and exhibitors and conduct exhibition sales and management
- Arrange translation into Spanish / French / Arabic.