**Tips:**

* Customize this letter to meet your needs or use as a guide. Personalize it
* Consider how you attending a SWE conference benefits the company and call that out – training, visibility, what you’ll bring back, recruitment, etc
* Remember that this is a proposal. Funding for conference could be budgeted under a number of areas such as Training, Management/Professional Development, Technical Training, HR
* Develop your SWE resume (all SWE leadership experience and other volunteer positions, examples of competencies developed through SWE like project management, strategic planning, program development, public speaking), SWE leadership plan (what will you and the company/team gain from SWE involvement and leadership experience)
  + If you are a speaker or Senator or in another SWE leadership position or committee, call that out as positive exposure for your company (and site or department) as well as professional development for you
* Link conference to your current development plan
* Do your research – SWE website (find additional materials), your company’s current SWE involvement (Corporate Partnership Council, SWE sponsorship), SWE leaders from your company, company leaders who are SWE members
* Search the speaker list to see if there are any from your company (especially higher ups). Note the ability to network with senior leadership from your company. Make a flyer to include with your proposal letter about which company leaders/executives will be attending or speaking, and you’ll be able to network with
* Include professional recruitment flyer if your employer needs more information on SWE (see attached files)
* If your company is a sponsor or attending the career fair, note that and consider going as part of the company’s recruitment effort (ask for help connecting with the right HR person)
* Consider the savings your attendance could bring to the company through obtaining CEU or PDH course credit at conference (compare the cost of 10 CEUs/PDHs in your area to the cost of conference assuming you attend at least 10 sessions )
* Even if you don’t need CEU/PDH credit, your department likely has a training budget with a particular amount allocated. Know the fiscal cycle. Be aware of the budget and the professional development of sending you to conference versus paying for other training and note this as needed.
* Offer to develop trainings or sessions based on what you learned or to bring information back to staff
* Don’t stop asking just because you’ve been turned down before. Negotiate. Have a plan and be flexible as the conversation changes
* Check out SWE grants for activities and programs, volunteer (registration is typically discounted for conference volunteers and speakers), pursue SWE leadership roles (some roles include SWE Society travel support)
* Practice your pitch and reach out to other SWE members in your organization for assistance

# Overcoming Objections:

**Objection:** **This conference will be too expensive.**

* SWE Conference is inexpensive compared to the value of learning, development, and networking opportunities. Continuing Education/Professional Development credits are included in the cost
  + - Express a willingness to cost share or negotiate. Point out discounts you have earned
    - Present an actual comparative cost of other organization conferences (e.g. SHPE, AISES, NSBE, Grace Hopper, IEEE, ASME)
    - Calculate cost of earning CEU/PDH from other sources compared to conference
    - Budgeting could come from multiple sources – training, HR, management/professional development. Ask if you can go as part of the company’s recruitment efforts

**Objection: What will the company (department/group/etc) gain from you attending conference?**

* More effective ways of developing employees and teams, increasing employee engagement, increasing productivity
* More effective ways to create a diverse and inclusive workforce and environment to help achieve internal D&I goals
* Access to programming to create or improve employee training and development
* Connections with vendors, trainers, potential candidates, potential clients, new product and service ideas
* Professional and technical skills development – career management, strategic leadership, innovation and disruption, inclusion and cultural awareness, self-management and development tracks
* Show how attending will save time or save/make money, or make money via learning
* Create trainings or presentations based on what your learned at conference

**Objection:** **Isn’t SWE just for women?**

* SWE is a diverse and inclusive organization is not limited to women
  + - SWE Diversity Principle: “At SWE, we acknowledge and respect the value of a diverse community. We recognize that the scope of diversity includes race/ethnicity, religion, family status, age, physical abilities, sexual and affectional orientation, actual or perceived gender, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status and occupational focus. Our society will maintain an environment that is supportive of these elements, and we will promote inclusion within our organization and the engineering community.”
* SWE has existed since 1950 and has grown to over 40,000 members worldwide
* SWE is a 501(c)3 non-profit “educational and service organization that empowers women to succeed and advance in the field of engineering and to be recognized for their life-changing contributions as engineers and leaders.”

**Objection:** **The Company/Department/Group cannot afford to have you away from the office.**

* A large part of the conference is over the weekend and only 2-3 days would be away
  + - Have a plan showing who will cover for you
    - Negotiate to not use vacation or PTO time as attendance develops you professionally and technically, and benefits the company
    - Absence is easier to manage now with e-mail and voicemail capabilities

**Objection:** **It will set a precedent (If I do this for you, I’ll have to do it for everyone). How do we justify sending you instead of someone else?**

* This is an investment that benefits the company/department/group through my development
* If you are a conference speaker or in a SWE leadership position, you are already representing and building positive exposure your company
* Supporting my conference attendance demonstrates the company’s commitment to my professional development
* Compare the cost of conference to other (more expensive) opportunities you may not be requesting funding or support for

Conference Cost Comparison (may want to compare costs to another conference in your field)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Society of Women Engineers (SWE)** | **Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)** | **National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)** | **Grace Hopper Celebration** | **American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)** |
| **Registration** | **$480 Professional member rate, requires SWE Membership** | $700.00 | $550 | $1150 | $575 |
| **Hotel**  ***\*Host site*** | **$250.00** | $200.00 | $200.00 | $250.00 | $200.00 |
| **CEU/PDH & Certification Courses** | **Included with Registration** | Included with Registration | $100-$300 | Included with Registration | Included with Registration |

**\*Costs are based on information from organizational websites and are subject to change.**

Letter Template for creating proposals on next page:

To: <INSERT NAME>

From: <INSERT NAME>

Subject: Society of Women Engineers 20XX Annual/WeLocal Conference

<INSERT CONFERENCE DATE>

<INSERT CONFERENCE LOCATION>

Date: <INSERT DATE>

Dear <INSERT NAME>,

I am requesting <INSERT COMPANY>’s support for my involvement in the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), one of the largest non-profit organizations dedicated to the advancement and empowerment of women in engineering and technology. Specifically, I am asking for support to attend < PICK CONFERENCE: the Society Annual Conference or a WE Local conference.>

I have been a SWE member for <INSERT NUMBER> years, and a <INSERT COMPANY> employee for <INSERT NUMBER> years. My membership and involvement with SWE has provided a forum for me to grow as a <leader, manager, public speaker, teammate, researcher, educator, entrepreneur, innovator> and overall engineer. The professional development skills I gain with SWE allow me to reach my fullest potential as an employee at <INSERT COMPANY>. <INSERT COMPANY> is a SWE Annual Conference sponsor and a member of the SWE Corporate Council.

Every year, Society of Women Engineers hosts an Annual/regional (WeLocal) Conference to promote the development of professional, technical, and leadership abilities of engineers.  Annual Conference/WeLocal sessions focus on career development, diversity and inclusion, innovation and disruption, strategic leadership (look at tracks and highlight the ones that apply to your role or company). There are also numerous opportunities for executive networking and mentorship, including senior leaders from <INSERT COMPANY>. Last year, over 14,000 engineering professionals, executives, and students attended SWE Annual Conference (over 400 attended each WeLocal session). Many of these attendees are pioneers not only for women in the field, but to engineering as a whole. Attendance at this event inspires me and reinvigorates my passion for my career choices each year. If you were recruited at conference by your company here is a good place to highlight that

**Benefits of SWE Conference Attendance**

There are numerous professional development offerings made through SWE’s Annual/WeLocal Conference and section events that are directly applicable to my career with <INSERT COMPANY>. Conference attendance provides me with an excellent opportunity to advance professionally, acquiring skills and techniques that will make me a more effective employee and future leader. I will also be able to network with like-minded professionals, many of whom I can call upon to troubleshoot specific issues in the workplace and possibly recruit into our workforce. I can also use the knowledge and skills gained in these conference sessions to present to our staff or develop new training material.

For example, <INSERT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR ROLE>.

INFO: Past conference tracks include:

* Advocating for change
* Career enhancement
* Career management and life transitions
* Entrepreneurship
* Inclusion and cultural awareness
* Innovation and disruption
* K-12 outreach
* Lightning talks (technical and soft-skills)
* STEM re-entry
* SWE Leadership
* Strategic Leadership
* Women in academia
* Women in government and military

<INFO: Other Opportunities>

* Presentation of research
* Networking (spread company name, resources for engineering help)
* Networking (with engineers who come for job search)
* Outreach with Invent It Build It or DesignLab

<DETAIL INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIFIC INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SWE>

Memory Joggers:

* Collegiate section leaders
* Collegiate sections committees
* Collegiate section outreach
* Professional section leadership
* Professional section committees
* Professional section outreach
* Region level committee, leadership
* Society level leadership, committee service
* Invent It Build It Involvement
* WeLocal DesignLab Involvement
* Presentation at Annual/WeLocal
* Advisor for collegiate section

If you are a speaker/SWE leader/volunteer talk about what you are going to do as part of that at conference and how that develops you to the benefit of your employer.

Example: “I have been selected as a speaker/panelist at WEXX and the session is titled “Getting Employer Support for Conference Attendance”. My talk will provide additional exposure for Company to a wider range of potential candidates and partners and an opportunity for valuable networking. Being selected to speak also develops me as a thought leader, public speaker, and subject matter expert.

This year I am serving as Vice President the XX section, which has helped to build my leadership and communication skills for excelling at ZZ Corp. My previous position as a Region Collegiate Representative has given me valuable experience relaying information and needs between different group, remotely assisting section leaders, and advising peers. Attending conference would be beneficial to my continued development as a ZZ Corp employee.

**Investment**

The following table is the budget for one attendee to attend conference and the included technical and professional development sessions:

<INCLUDE AS NECESSARY AND ADJUST COSTS. THIS IS A SAMPLE BUDGET>

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Cost** | **Notes** |
| Membership Dues | $100 |  |
| Annual Conference |  |  |
| Registration | $500 | Varies based on membership status and relevant discounts, if receiving a discount note here |
| Hotel | $1000 | Approximately $250/night for 4 nights |
| Travel | $400 | Round-trip airfare |
| Meals/Incidentals | $150 | $50/day |
| **Total** | **$2150** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Cost** | **Notes** |
| WE Local Conference |  |  |
| Registration | $150 | Varies based on membership status and relevant discounts |
| Hotel | $400 | Approximately $200/night for 2 nights |
| Travel | $400 | Round-trip airfare |
| Meals/Incidentals | $100 | $50/day |
| **Total** | **$1050** |  |

I am also requesting days off to travel to and attend the Society Conference that will not impact my personal PTO or vacation days. The couple days spent in the company of inspiring women and engineers equips me with the tools to perform my best work for the rest of the year. I will also be developing knowledge and skills that will better my abilities as a <INSERT COMPANY> employee and will be able to bring this information back to the team/department/company.

If you are receiving a discounted registration rate for being a volunteer, speaker, etc highlight that here. Example:

The cost of the Annual Conference registration is offset by the volunteer opportunities in which I participate. Each year, SWE hosts an outreach event for girls local to the city where the conference is being held called Invent It Build It. Participation in this event not only earns credit toward conference registration for the following year, but inspires young girls to become future engineers and reminds current engineers why they chose this career path. Due to my participation last year, my registration is partially paid.

I hope you will consider the information I’ve presented herein and welcome the opportunity to discuss it further. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

<INSERT SIGNATURE>