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Call for Expressions of Interest:
Hosting the 2028 Innovate4Cities Conference (I4C28)

Hosting an Innovate4Cities Conference offers a unique opportunity to bring together a broad range of stakeholders from around the world, including city and national government leaders, researchers, academia and businesses, to bridge knowledge and action and accelerate local climate action.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and UN-Habitat warmly invite potential hosts from around the world to express their interest in hosting the 2028 edition of the conference.

What is Innovate4Cities?

Innovate4Cities (I4C) is the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy's (GCoM) city-focused research and innovation initiative, dedicated to closing the knowledge gaps and action priorities that cities and local governments face through cross-sector partnerships and solutions. Learn more in our 2026 open access book, "A Global Research and Action Agenda on Cities and Climate Change Science: The Innovate4Cities Initiative."

What are the Innovate4Cities (I4C) Conferences?

The Innovate4Cities (I4C) Conference is the premier global convening of GCoM and UN-Habitat at the intersection of city climate science, policy, and practice. It brings together the leaders who generate evidence, shape policy, and implement urban climate action across local, regional, and national government, alongside academia, civil society, and industry.

In 2026, I4C26 convened in Africa for the first time at UN-Habitat's Nairobi headquarters, with almost 5,000 online registrations and 1,200 in-person participants. Over three days, it convened city leaders, researchers, policymakers, and innovators across 128 sessions, hosted the largest in-person organised review of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (SRCities), and staged the third AI x City Climate Action Hackathon. I4C26 also brought together a Local Leaders Forum of subnational leaders, including Nairobi City County, and hosted dialogue with Member States to advance multilevel collaboration on urban climate action.

The initiative's growth mirrors a broader shift, as cities have moved from the margins to the centre of climate ambition through milestones such as the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation SURGe Initiative and the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP). As the global agenda moves from COP31 (Antalya, 2026) to COP32 (Addis Ababa, 2027) and the conclusion of the second Global Stocktake in 2028, the evidence generated in and by cities feeds directly into national and global ambition - including successive Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the implementation of policy-relevant takeaways from the forthcoming IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (SR Cities).

I4C Conferences evolved from the 2018 Cities and Climate Change Science Conference in Edmonton, which produced the Global Research and Action Agenda (GRAA) that continues to guide them today.

I4C Conferences at a glance

Edition	Dates	Location	Format	Highlights
Cities and Climate Change Science Conference (CitiesIPCC) ***Precursor to the I4C conferences***	5–7 March 2018	Edmonton, Canada	In-person	The inaugural global science conference on cities and climate change. Brought together in-person and online participants from 64 countries and launched the first Global Research and Action Agenda (GRAA).
I4C21	11–15 October 2021	Virtual	Online	A landmark global online gathering of 159 countries that established the Global Research and Action Agenda (GRAA) as a cornerstone of urban climate action.
I4C24	10–12 September 2024	Montréal, Canada	In-person	A vibrant in-person edition which drew participants from over 100 countries across more than 200 sessions, positioned to inform the IPCC's Seventh Assessment cycle (AR7) and concluded with the updated GRAA.
I4C26	21–24 June 2026	Nairobi, Kenya	In-person	Hosted for the first time on the African continent and convened the largest in-person organised review of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (SR Cities).
I4C28	***To be confirmed***	***To be confirmed***	**In-person**	**The next edition, now open for host bids (the subject of this EOI).**

The 2028 Innovate4Cities Conference (I4C28)

I4C28 arrives at a pivotal moment. Coming a year after the planned launch of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (SRCities), it is well placed to translate the report's findings into urban policy and practice, building on the momentum of COP31 and COP32. For I4C28, UN-Habitat and GCoM are looking for a host that is interested in being at the centre of the urban climate movement and showcasing national and local climate leadership on a global stage. The hosting institution should also be interested in bringing together experts from the region and leaving a lasting legacy of research, collaboration, and climate action rooted in the host country.

I4C28 has the following objectives:

- **Accelerate science-informed urban climate action by deepening** the connections between science, policy, and practice
- **Establish the premier global forum for supporting the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities - translating its findings into practical pathways,** tools, and partnerships that support local and regional governments in delivering ambitious climate solutions.

- **Showcase cutting-edge research, innovation, and implementation practices** that help cities overcome knowledge, finance, and implementation gaps, measure progress against GRAA priorities, strengthen multilevel governance, and cultivate the next generation of urban climate leaders.
- **Strengthen and operationalize multilevel partnerships**, by advancing collaboration across local, regional, national and global actors, building on the momentum of COP initiatives including CHAMP and SURGe.
- **Take stock of - and welcome a new - decade of urban climate leadership,** drawing on the collective evidence and impact of GCoM and UN-Habitat communities and partners to demonstrate the role of cities as the second Global Stocktake concludes.

Who can participate at I4C28?

Participants at the conference include, but are not limited to, city and national government leaders, researchers and academia, youth and community representatives, businesses, civil society, finance institutions, United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

Strategic orientation of the host country and co-nominated city

Expressions of interest to host Innovate4Cities 2028 may be led by national governments, GCoM signatory cities, or local academic/research institutions. Consortium applications are encouraged. All Expressions of Interest should be supported by national governments.

In line with the multi-stakeholder nature of previous Innovate4Cities Conferences, I4C28 is expected to convene cross-sector leaders globally while enriching the GRAA and informing discussion with its regional context - elevating underrepresented and marginalized voices who are integral parts of the solution.

The physical host(s) of I4C28 are expected to be able to host a convening that can accommodate 1,000-1,500 in-person participants, with the desirable ambition of leaving a lasting legacy made tangible at local, national, and global levels.

UPDATED: Bid process and time frame

The closing date for receiving the Expression of Interest for the 2028 Innovate4Cities Conference is 19 October 2026. The table below outlines the time frame of important dates for the complete bidding process.

Milestone	Date
Opening of the Call for Expression of Interest	10 Sept 2026
Deadline to receive Expressions of Interest	4 Nov 2026
Provide potential hosts with bidding package and guidelines	10 Nov 2026
Deadline to receive Bidding Proposals	4 Dec 2026
Bid evaluation	Dec 2026 - March 2027
Candidates informed of selection results	March 2027
Signing of Partnership and Conference Agreement	March 2027

Financial and in-kind contributions

A bid to host the 2028 Innovate4Cities Conference must include a proposal for delivery of the full event, detailing financial and in-kind components over the period 2026-2028 - including, but not limited to:

- Pre, during and post event management (all inclusive);
- Conference services, registration and venue logistics and delivery;
- A suitable venue with conference facilities, meeting rooms, technology infrastructure, and an exhibition area for up to 1,500 in-person participants, including registration and accreditation services, security services and equipment meeting GCoM and United Nations regulations in the city and at the venue;
- Local Steering committee (Science Practice) to co-curate Programme;
- Communications lead contact point and capacity to support the promotion of the conference and showcase local climate action and leadership;
- Support for participation from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- Interpretation for main sessions; and
- Sufficient capacity to meet operational and logistical needs at national, city, and venue level.

Further detail and breakdown on the purpose and allocation of this contribution must be provided as part of the full bidding proposal.

Expression of interest

All bids are welcome, and must include demonstrated hosting support from a governmental partner (national, regional or local). Expressions of interest to host the 2028 Innovate4Cities Conference (I4C28) are required to send an official communication (on letterhead and with signature) to the following email address: *unhabitat-climate@un.org* AND *innovate4cities@gcomprojectsupport.org*

Should you have any questions regarding this Expression of Interest, please contact us at *unhabitat-climate@un.org* AND *innovate4cities@gcomprojectsupport.org*.

Please note: *Any submission which does not meet the criteria, is incomplete, or received after the communicated deadline will not be considered.*