A contract is an agreement between a supplier of goods or a service and the conference organising body. The purpose of a contract is to protect both parties. It usually provides details of:

- what is to be supplied
- the agreed price.

It is usually the supplier who writes the contract, so remember to read it carefully or hire the services of an industry lawyer.

Contracts are formal and recognised documents, and are legally binding.

Negotiations with suppliers should take into account:

- the conference organiser’s budget and the planned image of the conference
- the supplier’s profit structure.

Past documentation is a valuable tool as a starting point to negotiate prices with suppliers. (Always update documentation so the next person can benefit from your experience). Useful information includes:

- number of delegates
- number of rooms required
- food and beverage costs
- session room hire
- contingency plans for the unexpected.

**Hotel/Venue**

Check the following items with a supplier to ensure a clear understanding of exactly what is being supplied for the agreed price:

- specify room type, rate and deposit (also, whether breakfast will be included)
- what will be accepted on the master account
- what will be the food and beverage costs, timelines and penalties if numbers are reduced
- what will be the policy on upgrading rooms
• run of the house
• short stay policy
• check-in and out
• early check-in and late check-out
• block booking time limit
• meeting room rates and 24-hour hold/access (no entry by another client)
• set-up charges
• cancellation policy
• audio-visual rental – what is extra?
• lock-up storage room
• telephone surcharges
• signage
• safety and fire codes.

This list is meant to be a starting point only for contract negotiations.

Any amendments to contracts by either party must be countersigned and dated with a return for contract approval.