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INTRODUCTION

From what was a simple debate in which Athens was chosen for 1896 and Paris for 1900 at the Congress for the Re-establishment of the Olympic Games, which was held in Paris in 1894, the candidature process for the Olympic Games has gradually evolved into a more organised, detail-oriented and sometimes competitive event.

It is a process that has been shaped by natural progression as well as necessity. It has also been influenced and defined by the decisions of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the actions of the candidate cities, increasing organisational requirements associated with staging the Games and even public input.

As a means of understanding the content and look of the candidature files ([Olympic Winter Games](#), [Summer Olympic Games](#)), key points in the evolution of these publications are highlighted. Before that, however, focus has been given to the different IOC terminology for defining the cities, identifying the process phases, and presenting some of the ways in which the committees of the cities as well as the IOC have been informed of the process and the candidatures via other publications such as the [Olympic Charter](#), the [Olympic Review](#) or a 'Manual' or 'Report'.

Note that this document covers the historical evolution of the Olympic host city candidature process at the IOC level and does not reflect national, country by country, processes in determining a candidate. It does not cover the election procedure itself.

THE CITIES AND CANDIDATURE PROCESS PHASES

- **Winter Games & Reserve Priority:** When the IOC decided in **1925** to establish a separate cycle of Olympic Winter Games, it was stipulated that priority for their location would be reserved for the country hosting the Games of the Olympiad. This priority, stipulated in the *Olympic Charter*, was only applied to the candidature process for the Olympic Winter Games between 1928 and 1940.
- **A Games Edition In Two Countries:** To date the **1956** Summer Games are the only edition to have been held in two countries - Melbourne, Australia being elected as the Olympic host city, but with the equestrian events later reallocated to Stockholm, Sweden due to Australian animal quarantine laws.
- **Olympic Games & A Neighbouring Country:** Despite the case of 1956, it was not until **1991** that the *Olympic Charter* rules on the location of the Games included the possibility of the Games to be held in two countries. The possibility was first introduced specifically for a city for the Winter Games that may not have all the geographical or topographical requirements to put forward a proposal with certain events in a neighbouring country. In the **2014** edition of the *Charter* the specification of Winter was removed, thereby opening the possibility to a neighbouring country being proposed for a Summer Games candidature.

- > **Candidates & Finalist Candidate Cities:** In response to the rise in cities applying for the Games, the IOC created the first version of a two-phase process with candidate cities and then finalist candidate cities. Used for the processes **between 2002 and 2006**, only those cities proposed by an electoral college and selected by the IOC Executive Board, advanced to the finalist phase and the host city election.
- > **Applicant & Candidates Cities:** Beginning with the Games of the XXIX Olympiad 2008 through to the **candidature process for the 2022 Winter Games**, a revised two-phase process was introduced. Regardless of the number of cities officially applying, they were first defined as applicants before being accepted by the IOC Executive Board to become candidate cities if they had the potential to organise successful Games.
- > **Interested & Candidate Cities:** As part of changes implement in response to [Olympic Agenda 2020 recommendations](#) the process for the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad **2024** was redesigned to encourage dialogue via an invitation phase for interested cities followed by the candidature process itself. The invitation phase, renamed the dialogue stage, has also been carried over into the candidature process for the Olympic Winter Games **2026**.

INFORMING THE CITIES AND THE IOC

- > **The First Step Towards A More Structured Process:** In early years, the candidature process was most often announced at a Session or by a circular letter. However, in the **1950s**, the IOC took a first step towards a more structured process, first providing cities with details on the conditions required to organise the Games, and then, with information on the necessary steps to apply for them.
- > **Evaluations Of The Cities:** In order to inform the IOC's members, broader feedback was sought on the candidates' technical and organisational capabilities as early as the candidature process for the **1960** Olympic Games. In subsequent years, the separate evaluative processes by the IOC, the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees were gradually merged and reshaped into the IOC Evaluation Commissions and Working Groups 'Reports' in order to reduce the workload and costs while still serving to inform.
- > **A First 'Manual' For Candidates:** As a response to requests from candidate cities, in **1992**, the IOC produced a 'Manual' for the Games of the XXVII Olympiad 2000. The publication incorporated suggestions from previous candidature committees, explanations of the phases of the process and indications of precisely what type of details each city needed to provide in its candidature file. This procedural 'Manual' has since evolved to address changing organisation requirements of staging the Games.
- > **The Olympic Review As A Means Of Communication:** For a period of time, the IOC's *Olympic Review* publication served as a medium for sharing information on the candidature processes. Articles or special issues dedicated specifically to the candidates, for example, provided IOC members as well as the Olympic Movement at large with valuable profiles of the cities' candidatures.
- > **A 'Manual' For Applicants:** Beginning with the introduction of an applicant cities phase for the process for **2008**, a second 'Acceptance Procedure' publication, which evolved over time, was also introduced to provide cities with information specific to this phase which was in place for the processes of the Games editions between **2008 and 2022**.

THE CANDIDATURE FILE

- > **A Candidature File First:** Originally, cities wishing to host the Games were often simply presented at a Session or wrote to the IOC indicating their interest. For the Games of the VII Olympiad **1920**, however, Antwerp went a step further. Their submission was a leather-bound publication detailing the city's Games plan. It is the earliest example of a candidature file in The Olympic Studies Centre Collections.
- > **Content & Format Variations In Candidature Submissions:** The record of candidate city submissions until the **1956** Olympic Games is defined by their variation. Ranging in size, their content includes original photos, limited details on aspects such as sports venues and transportation capabilities as well as descriptions or tourist type brochures on the proposed host city.
- > **A Questionnaire For Candidates:** In the **1950s**, the IOC realised that in order to make a more informed choice of a host city they required more information from the candidate cities. Thus, an IOC questionnaire was created and first introduced for the **1960** candidature process. Originally consisting of 13 questions, the [questionnaire](#) which was included in the 1955 edition of the *Olympic Charter* has been adapted and added to in subsequent years, reflecting the evolution of the Games to include elements such as the environment, sustainability and legacies.
- > **Additional Questionnaires & Expanding Candidature Files:** Candidature files for the processes of the Games between the **1960s** and the **1980s** became increasingly content heavy. Influenced by growing media coverage of the Games, for example, a radio and television questionnaire was added. So too were questionnaires from the International Federations. Additionally, some cities still provided photographic or touristic type content with files consisting of as many as five volumes.
- > **First Formatting & Content Guidelines For Candidate Cities:** Beginning in **1992** with the candidature process for the Games of the XXVII Olympiad 2000, the IOC has worked to provide cities with clear guidelines enabling them to produce more structured candidature or applicant files. Indications for formatting, content and information limits have helped the cities to streamline and standardise their submissions, which, in turn, has facilitated the evaluation of the cities.
- > **Applicant & Candidature Responses:** With the introduction of a revised two-phase process to the Games editions between **2008 and 2022** cities were first required to submit their responses to a list of IOC questions as part of the applicant phase. If accepted to move forward in the process a city's file then expanded with the submission of responses to an additional IOC questionnaire for candidates.
- > **Recent Process Adaptations As Seen in The Candidature Files:** In response to Olympic Agenda 2020, the candidature process was first adapted for the **2024** Summer Games and then the [2026 Winter Games](#). For **2024**, cities were only required to submit a file at the candidature stage, with their submission done in three thematic-based parts to make up the whole of their candidature file. For **2026**, there is still only a submission required at the candidature stage, but it has reverted back to being a single filing with a reduced number of questions to be responded to.