

Aligning your event hosting strategy with your place brand ambitions

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Introduction

One of the joys of working with our Advisory Group of places at City Nation Place is that they constantly challenge us to answer questions. [And I mean that in a good way!] This report has been compiled in response to one such question – how do places leverage the events that they host to meet the broader objectives of their place brand strategy? The immediate economic value of hosting business or association events, or “mega” consumer events, has long been measured in terms of hotel bookings and incremental spend, but how can the dots be joined between an events hosting strategy and other place objectives: ie, building place reputation, progressing economic development ambitions and delivering legacy impact?

One of the interviewees in this report, Ken Pereira, Head of Business Events at Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, feels that event professionals and CVBs are very good at talking to each other, but perhaps less good at demonstrating the value of what they do to wider stakeholders [sound familiar?]. The research process for this report has demonstrated to us that there is a huge amount of work being done to join these dots, and to ensure that events deliver a wider impact for the places that host them. There is perhaps still work to be done to measure this, and certainly to communicate this.

In this report, you will find...

- A summary of our learnings and recommendations
- An overview of the responses to our survey asking what places are prioritising in order to ensure business and/or consumer events contribute to the bigger picture
- Perspectives from event organisers
- In-depth interviews with places happy to share their approach to strategising the hosting of events and delivering legacy impact

We hope that this is useful to your work.

We would like to thank our **City Nation Place Champions**, place leadership organisations who continue to support this benchmarking work we do. We would also like to thank everyone who agreed to talk to us, and in particular Loren Christie at BestCities, who kindly made introductions to facilitate some of those interviews.

City Nation Place Champions

Cleveland

essential
COSTA
RICA

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KINGSTON
– Ontario, Canada –

NEW ZEALAND
STORY

OTTAWA

VISIT
PITTSBURGH

Staffordshire

TASMANIAN

BestCities
GLOBAL ALLIANCE

The BestCities Global Alliance is a community of 13 premier destinations who collaborate amongst themselves, with clients and with their partners to create a positive impact through business events. Each destination not only provides exemplary service and experiences for their clients but they work to incorporate innovation, sustainability and impact into all that they do. The 13 destination partners include Melbourne, Tokyo, Singapore, Copenhagen, Dublin, Madrid, Berlin, Cape Town, Dubai, Vancouver, Guadalajara, Washington, D.C. and Houston. If you wish to learn more about the BestCities Global Alliance and how to become a destination partner, contact Loren Christie, Managing Director at loren@bestcities.net.

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Learnings and recommendations

As we started work on this benchmarking project, we realised that “aligning your event hosting strategy with your place brand ambitions” is a very broad topic – from hosting the mega global events such as the Olympics or FIFA World Cup, to hosting a trade association’s annual conference, or creating an annual festival, the range of events hosted by cities and regions around the world is obviously huge. Equally diverse is the range of “place brand ambitions.” Events have the potential to put your place on the world map of attention, to build or change perceptions. They also bring the world to your place – letting them experience it as visitors or make essential business or academic connections.

From our survey and our interviews, one thing is clear. Everyone we have spoken to believes that events have the potential to deliver a positive impact beyond the obvious measurable revenues in venue, hotel, and restaurant spend.

Everyone believes this, but very few places have worked out how to measure the impact on reputation, talent attraction, investment attraction, or quality of life for the host communities. Consequently, it’s not always a tale well-told for stakeholders, which can lead to a lack of support from the very people and organisations who can make the difference.

The following recommendations have been drawn from the many conversations we’ve been having and also the case studies we have the privilege to read that are entered into the annual City Nation Place Awards. Where we share an example from these Awards finalists, you can read more as a subscriber to the [Place Brand Portfolio](#), which is our online directory of case studies of best practice in place branding and place marketing from around the world.

Hosting mega or major events

The opportunity to host mega events, such as the Olympics, or FIFA World Cup, or even Taylor Swift concerts, is not something that every city or place can respond to. Your place needs the physical assets and infrastructure, or the willingness to invest in them. Bidding for a mega sporting event should bring all stakeholders together and so, in a perfect world, would be in line with a unified vision for development that your government, your private sector, and your citizens are all on board with. These events come with a greater risk, and a greater reward. Aubrey Walton, now the executive director with FIFA responsible for managing the relationship with host cities, shared an example of the positive impact that hosting the NFL Draft had on the city of Cleveland, and she was very clear that cities should grasp the opportunity to host mega events.

Both Aubrey and Carlena Limmer from Duco Events in New Zealand stressed that major event organisers recognise the need to work with host cities to ensure they can create a positive impact above and beyond visitor spend and hotel revenues. There’s a conversation to be had about “social licence” – large events can be extremely disruptive for your citizens and so the story of the value of the event needs to be told to ensure that you build civic pride rather than civic unrest.

Stockholm in Sweden was one of those cities around the world which hosted thousands of Swifties when Taylor came to town. Every city on the Eras tour has stories to tell of creatively leveraging the concerts for economic impact. However Stockholm, or Swiftholm as it called itself temporarily, is the only city we know which used the occasion to develop an approach to measuring the wellbeing impact of the hosting experience for their citizens. [See the Place Brand Portfolio for more details].

Our interview with Emma France in Sheffield tells the story of a city that aims to inspire its communities when they host events. Christchurch in New Zealand regularly checks in with their residents to see if the events they host are perceived to be adding to the quality of life for their community. The research tells them that events add to the vibrant character of their city’s brand which their citizens have bought into. The Christchurch government has also set clear criteria based on their place brand ambitions which they use to select which events to support financially.

Learnings and recommendations

The Christchurch interview in this report also demonstrates how major sporting events can not only create opportunities for promoting the city brand to a wider audience or for delivering community impact, but also how they can be

leveraged to support investment attraction for key economic sectors. And finally, Christchurch has an established model for measuring the impact of major events.

Key recommendations:

1. Have a place brand strategy - a unifying vision for the kind of place you are and want to be – which provides criteria against which you make decisions on the events you want to host in your place.
2. Be confident that you have the right organisational collaboration and support in your place [including from your community] to provide the investment that might be required to host major events and to leverage them effectively.
3. Be ambitious – look beyond venue, hotel, and restaurant revenues or media opportunities and think about opportunities to showcase your place's strengths or ambitions across other areas. Taylor's in town? What opportunities does that create to showcase musical talent or education? Hosting a motorsports event? What opportunities does that create to convene or showcase engineering expertise or innovation? Football, cricket, athletics? Does this create an opportunity to host a sports science, or physical education, or sports nutrition event to create those essential academic and innovator connections?
4. Check in with your community regularly – through resident surveys for example – to ensure you have the social licence and support to be a great host city.
5. Choose to work with major event organisers who want to be good partners – whether this is creating the opportunity for you to showcase your place to their audience, delivering media value, developing opportunities for social or community engagement, and/or they are happy to work with you to evaluate and tell the story of success.

Hosting academic, association, or business conferences

In many cities and regions around the world, it feels that "business events" have in the past been siloed away from tourism and economic development, whilst those people who are actively engaged in attracting and delivering these events to their place have been frustrated by the lost opportunities. Our survey and the interviews we carried out suggest that places are taking an increasingly robust approach to attracting and leveraging events that can support their economic ambitions.

85% of destination marketing organisations or convention bureaux and 75% of the economic development or investment attraction agencies responding to our survey said that either there already was strong collaboration in place or that they were actively working towards better collaboration to ensure that every event hosted delivered a broader impact than immediate "heads on beds" revenue.

Our interview with Ken Pereira, Head of Business Events at Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, highlighted a proactive approach to building stakeholder confidence in the power of business events to grow the city's global reputation and deliver against key development objectives. His team hosted and created an event, *Unleashing the Potential of Business Events*, to show that "conferences aren't just a visitation driver, we're also a strategic driver."

Every place we spoke to has a network of business event ambassadors - business or academic leaders involved in global research and associations - who they work with to attract conferences. Some places are working to motivate ambassadors by bringing them together for events to showcase what can be delivered, or to get them thinking about delivering a broader positive impact from the events that they could host.

Learnings and recommendations

We would argue again that this is where having an articulated, unifying place brand strategy or “north star” vision for your place would work well to motivate and inspire.

There’s a clear consensus that hosting these larger association or business events creates an untapped opportunity to deliver better outcomes for your citizens. There are the immediate revenue opportunities and the “happenstance” opportunity of having all of these bright, talented people with shared interests together in one place, but on top of that, there’s the opportunity to showcase academic strengths, attract talent, make important connections for your startups and innovators, and address particular social or health challenges in your place.

This can work at a city, region, or national level. One of the standout examples entered into the 2025 City Nation Place Awards is Moldova’s example of hosting the 46th World Conference of Vine and Wine, where the Invest Moldova team leveraged the opportunity to showcase and grow Moldova’s strengths in wine production, one of the country’s most important economic sectors. Again, you can read more in the Place Brand Portfolio.

On the issue of “legacy” or “positive” impact, there is some inconsistency in what we have heard. For some of our interviewees, including for example Fáilte Ireland and Singapore Tourism Board, developing a strong proposition for supporting event organisers to develop legacy or social impact

projects was seen as necessary to be competitive, with RFPs now asking for information on this capability. At the same time, convention teams recognise that event organisers are often too busy to think about this and so there’s a need to make it easy – to create toolkits, propose ideas, facilitate connections with community groups etc.

There’s also a consensus that this can be a lot of work! In some convention teams, there’s a dedicated sub-team working to identify and deliver impact opportunities whilst in others the strategy is to build it into the team’s DNA when working with event organisers. There’s a danger that this becomes viewed as a huge challenge, but if you have the connections in place, have nurtured interest to be involved with community partners, and importantly know your place and what it stands for, it should be possible to integrate added value into every event.

The real challenge is in measurement. Places are still struggling to evaluate the longer-term impact of events beyond immediate economic results. Some of those academic or business introductions, some of those community or social impact projects, might not have a measurable economic impact for months or years. This is a code still to be cracked and we’ll continue to hunt for best practice. We recommend that you read more about [the approach being taking in Flanders, Belgium](#), to systemise the measurement of social impact for events. In the meantime, telling the story of “softer” impact measures is still hugely important.

Key recommendations:

- 1.** Where your place offers subventions or financial support for events, this should be offered based on criteria that relate to your place brand ambitions [those key sectors, social challenges or opportunities that your place wants to address] and not just on the identified potential for immediate revenues.
- 2.** As a destination marketing organisation or convention bureau charged with attracting business events, invest in connecting with government departments and economic development teams to understand where events can best support their economic targets.
- 3.** Nurture and engage your network of ambassadors to not only attract business and association events to your place, but also to develop and deliver a broader or more sustainable economic impact. Inspire them with your vision.
- 4.** Develop the tools that enable you to propose and deliver legacy or positive impact in partnership with event organisers, eg: a clear articulation of what is important to your place; a list of community or charity contacts or projects that would be willing partners; a toolkit of ideas and examples of successful past projects.
- 5.** Be clear about what the objectives of your place / organisation are in hosting business events and report on KPIs related to those objectives – and on top of that, tell those stories of impact that might be missed if you only focus on numerical results.

Developing “on brand” events in your place

We hadn’t envisaged thinking about this aspect of events strategy when we started working on this research, but then certain case studies came to light and it does seem that where events have emerged from a place’s strengths, or grown out of the culture or brand identity of the place, they have great potential to deliver on all levels for your place brand. They can grow reputation, build civic pride, deliver economic benefits, and grow economic opportunities.

On the investment attraction side, we spoke with Paul Eschmann, Head of Investment Promotion with Basel Area Business & Innovation. His team initiated and organised a conference which they called BOOM, with the goal of bringing start up founders in the health tech space together. This was also leveraged for investment promotion activities, to show that Basel has a leading life science ecosystem. The conference was very successful but running conferences of this size is not the core business of Basel Area Business & Innovation and so the event has now motivated the MCH Group – a public / privately owned organisation responsible for developing and running events and venues in Basel – to establish an owned conference on healthtech. It’s become another of several events in the city which Paul’s team leverage.

We spoke to Emma France at Marketing Sheffield and also to Hannah Bennett, the event director of the Crossed Wires Festival, which after just two years, can already call itself the largest podcast festival in the world, generating media coverage valued at £2.1 million. One of the Festival’s co-founders is live events maestro James O’Hara - a proud Sheffield resident, who also helped found the city’s much-loved Tramlines Festival, originally created to breathe life back into local bars and music venues that fell quiet during the summer university break. James and the team have a knowledge of and connections with the city which have supported the event’s success, and Hannah feels that the city’s cultural heritage and history have added real value, becoming deeply entwined with the festival’s identity. The Festival also enables Marketing Sheffield to shine a light on the emerging podcast talents and skills in the city.

One of the finalists in the 2025 City Nation Place Awards is Go Vilnius, who have created a new annual festival rooted in the culinary heritage of Lithuania – the Pink Soup Festival. The Festival transformed Lithuania’s beloved cold beetroot soup into a citywide celebration and what began as a quirky idea has grown into a vibrant gastronomic and visual spectacle that unites residents, businesses, and communities and attracts visitors. In 2025 this event attracted over 93,000 guests, with over 16,000 international visitors, and impressive media and social media coverage. This “home-grown” festival has delivered substantial economic impact as well as building civic pride.

At our 2025 City Nation Place UK conference, we heard from Wayne Hemingway of Hemingway Design how places in the UK have avoided “place blanding” and built their reputation and civic pride by creating events rooted in their culture or identity. Lowestoft, the UK’s most easterly town, has launched the First Light Festival, celebrating the first sunrise in the country, bringing together arts and cultural experiences for a 24-hour midsummer weekend that has made the town a “must visit” destination. Another UK town, Blackburn, has a higher percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector than the British average and so a licence to claim that it should be considered the UK’s pre-eminent “making” town. The National Festival of Making was born, attracting nearly 40,000 people, taking over the town centre, celebrating the makers and workers of the town and delivering a positive economic impact. This sits alongside an increased investment in supporting those makers, with the creation and expansion of The Making Rooms, workshop and demonstration spaces for community-based makers.

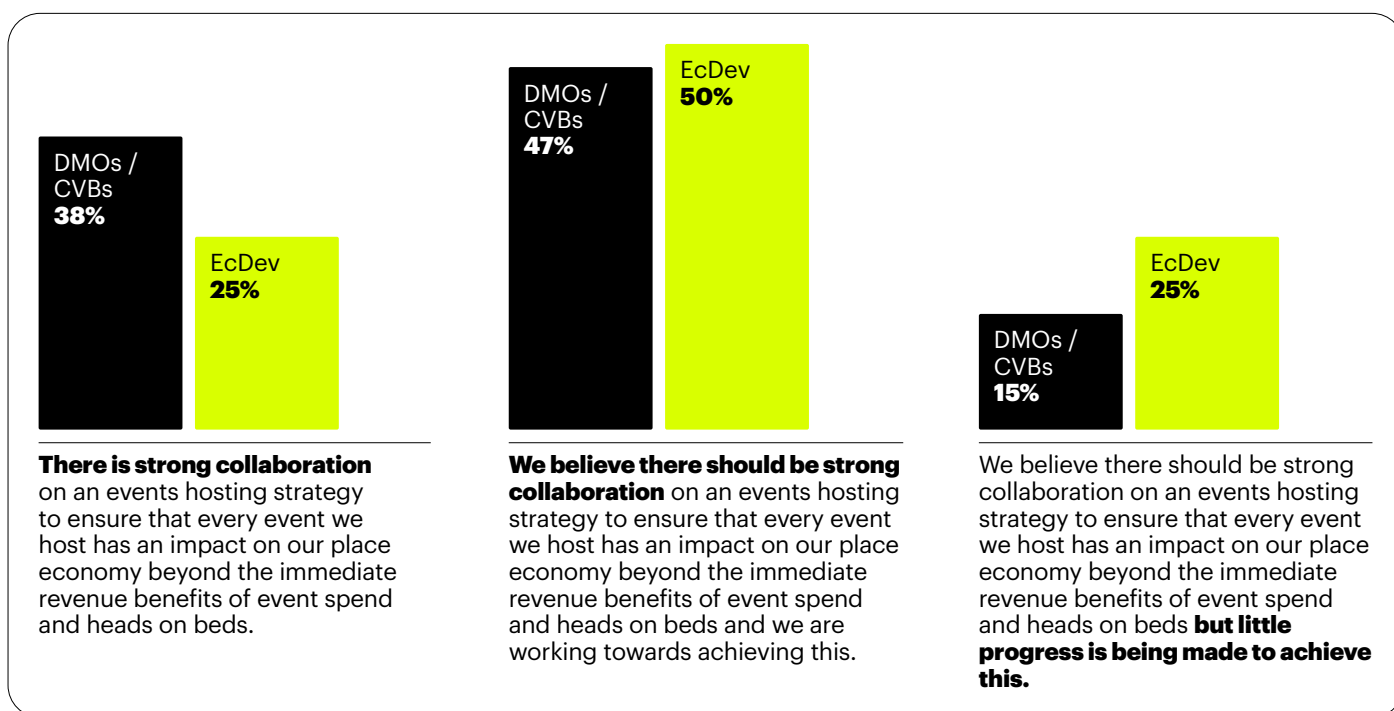
Key learning

When you’re putting in the work to understand your place identity and build your place narrative, it’s always worth thinking about how this might be brought to life through events. These can be much more effective than advertising or traditional storytelling at amplifying your narrative, building civic pride, and delivering positive economic impact. Identify partners in your community to deliver these events – such as untapped local talent or community organisations – to keep them authentic.

Our survey says...

Over August and September 2025, we invited place brand teams, destination marketing organisations [DMOs], convention bureaux [CVBs], and economic development or investment attraction teams [EcDev] to respond to a short survey designed to provide a better understanding of strategic approaches to hosting events. We received 61 responses including representatives from every continent around the world [see page 43 for a more detailed breakdown of responses].

We asked first about collaboration between the traditional custodians of a place's event strategy – the DMOs and CVBs – and the organisations responsible for economic development strategy. Everyone believed that it was important to collaborate to ensure that every event hosted has an impact on the place economy beyond immediate revenues. The majority of respondents either claimed to already have a strong collaborative relationship or said that they are purposefully working towards building one.



This does leave 15% of DMOs/CVBs and 25% of EcDevs frustrated by the lack of progress on collaboration. We asked what the perceived obstacles were to achieving this and, to be honest, the responses echo those we have received on past surveys about more general collaboration between tourism and economic development organisations – a lack of leadership, team dynamism, or resources. Respondents also mentioned a lack of shared KPIs, or their respective organisations having different perceived missions.

Our survey says...

The EcDev leaders who responded to our survey certainly saw the value of events in helping them to achieve their mission. Asked whether they saw it as important to take an active and collaborative role in working to attract business and/or academic events, they scored this at 9 out of 10 [where 10 is very important and 1 is not important at all]. They also scored taking an active and collaborative role in working to attract international music, sporting, or other consumer events at 8 out of 10.

In fact, respondents to our survey from across place branding teams, DMOs and CVBs, and EcDev organisations demonstrated consensus in their belief in the importance of attracting events that align with economic strengths or ambitions, that provide opportunities for important connections, or that align with the place brand values therefore enhancing place reputation, with every objective scoring at least 8 out of 10 for importance.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not very important at all and 10 is very important, how important do you believe it is for the success of your organisation's mission and objectives to do the following...

EcDev
 DMO/CVB
 Place Brand teams

Attract business, academic, or consumer events which align with our place brand values and enhance the brand perceptions we wish to build for our place



Attract business or academic events which align with our place's economic sector strengths and ambitions



Leverage business or academic events hosted in our place to build connections we believe will be beneficial to our economic ambitions, e.g.: connecting organisers with potential speakers, putting together educational tours etc



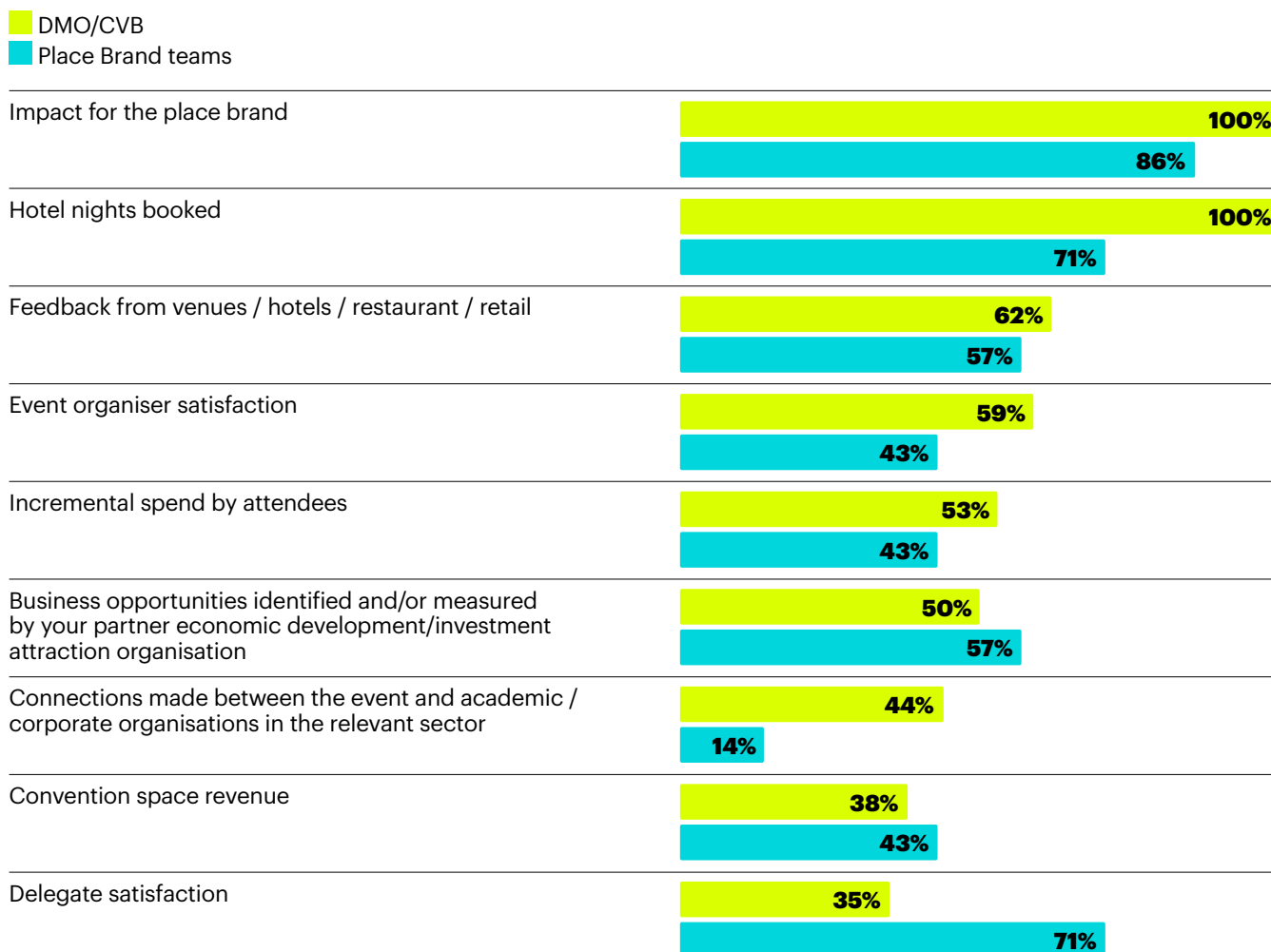
Leverage sporting, music, or other international consumer events hosted in our place to meet broader economic ambitions, e.g.: hosting prospective investors, working with other place partners on infrastructure and place shaping that will have a lasting impact



Whilst all our respondents clearly see the important potential of events, there is still perhaps some inconsistency on setting KPIs to encourage this best practice. For our EcDev respondents, 75% have not established KPIs for their team's success at leveraging events to support investment attraction or economic development objectives. Those that have set KPIs are looking at hotel nights booked, tax revenue growth, media coverage, stakeholder engagement, and the leads generated.

Our survey says...

When we asked DMOs, CVBs and place brand teams about KPIs, it's interesting to see that measuring the impact of events on the place brand reputation is seen to be as important as the most "traditional" measure of economic impact, ie: the number of hotel nights booked. 50% of DMOs/CVBs and 57% of place brand teams say that they do measure the business opportunities identified or measured by their EcDev partners.



Our survey says...

We also wanted to understand whether place teams are working with larger event organisers to deliver legacy projects, or “positive impact” beyond the immediate benefits to attendees. 52% of our respondents say that their team is working with event organisers to develop legacy projects. Given the wide range of approaches we have seen with legacy projects, we wanted to understand whether places were more focused on “local” vs “global” impact. All of our respondents ranked “Impact for your industry / sector – e.g.: a new research project, long-term partnership, or long-term project” as of most interest, with community impact in second place, and global impact in third place.

**Please rank the following possible legacy impact options
in term of which would be most interesting to you...**

1st

Impact for your industry / sector
– e.g.: a new research project,
long-term partnership, or long-
term project

2nd

Impact for the host location
community – e.g.: hosting
an open event for residents
or delivering educational
experiences for students

3rd

Impact for the wider global
community – e.g.: solving a
global challenge

Event organisers' perspectives

13 Chris Amsinger, IPVS

Creating legacy impact through an association event

15 Hannah Bennett, Crossed Wires

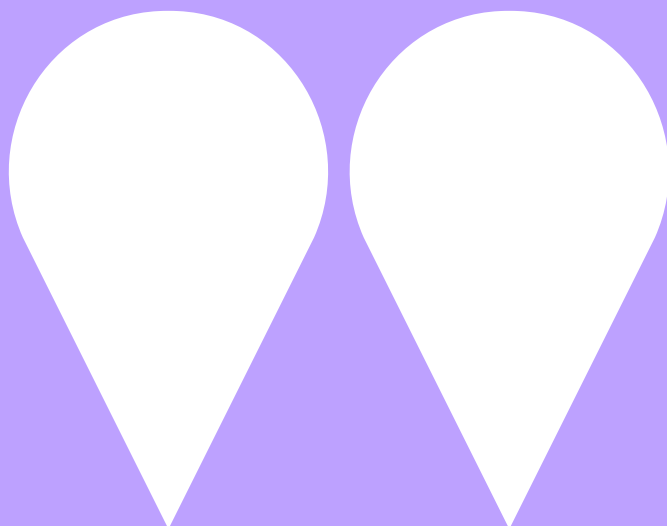
Building an event on a city's heritage

16 Carlena Limmer, Duco Events

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18 Aubrey Walton, FIFA

Tips for cities hosting mega events



**Chris Amsinger**

Campaign & Communication Specialist
Kenes Group, The Netherlands

IPVS Creating legacy impact through an association event

The Kenes Group is a world leader in the organisation of medical and scientific events, and one of their events, the IPVS or the International Papillomavirus Society's annual conference, is a finalist in the 2025 Best Cities Incredible Impacts Programme. Chris describes herself as the "worker bee" and her role is to amplify the work of the IPVS and deliver a communications strategy to raise awareness of the human papillomavirus [HPV] by empowering and energising a global partner network to implement the International HPV Awareness Campaign.

The IPVS was officially founded in the year 2000 as a society of clinical researchers, medical experts, academics, and public health policy makers working together to develop the cutting-edge science that could lead to the prevention of HPV-related disease. The society has also recognised that public awareness of HPV is perilously low and that it's really difficult to solve a major health problem affecting almost everyone if nobody knows about it. Nine years ago, the society launched the International HPV Awareness Campaign to tackle the momentous challenge of building public understanding and this has become a core activity of the IPVS. As Chris explains, this lends itself really well to delivering legacy activities in the locations where the annual conference is held: "We need to find the pockets of underserved communities that don't have good vaccination uptake or have low levels of cervical screening. It could be about educating health care providers more, or about teaching medical students during their immunology studies."

Chris mentioned that they were fortunate to benefit from a good start to the conference's legacy work in Edinburgh. "That's really the first conference where we've achieved what we envisioned. There's been years before where we tried to get legacy activities off the ground, but for different reasons it was not coming together as well as it could, but in Edinburgh we had a very helpful partner with EICC [the Edinburgh International Conference Centre] who really partnered with us to get the legacy activities as visible as possible through their networks of influence. And we had an amazing group of professionals from the IPVS membership, the local organising committee, you maybe call them ambassadors. They all have really busy jobs, teaching, researching, and so on, and somehow we managed to make time and push ourselves towards delivering a lot of significant sustainable impact in Scotland."

Chris's role as the lead on communications was to keep everything on schedule and she acknowledges that this is a lot of work if it's to be done properly. "The activity was over the whole course of the year and actually has gone into the following year. So it is still going on long after the conference - that's real legacy activity. It's like planting seeds and it's not a one season crop." In terms of what was achieved – the IPVS worked with Public Health Scotland to create a web page where people can ask questions about HPV, accessible through a QR code, encouraging vaccination, tied to local, trusted resources. Digital billboards were put in place at universities encouraging students to find out more about HPV, how it can affect their health, and encouraging vaccination.





It's a learning experience. And I think if I do five of these events, then I'll be able to really speak to the recipe for success.

A local IPVS member who is a professor in immunology at Napier University, revised her curriculum to include a module for HPV, and medical science students are being educated on the importance of HPV vaccination. The local team designed interactive lessons for schools in the community with low vaccination uptake to help them understand what HPV is and not be afraid of getting the vaccine - Public Health Scotland sat in on lessons to assess possibilities for scaling the exercise.

Raising awareness of HPV literally saves lives. However, Chris acknowledges that the situation in every host location is different. The next IPVS conference will take place in Bangkok in October 2025. Chris has been working for months with Thai IPVS members and local organisations to co-create a set of activities that align with the policies and challenges in that location and leave a lasting positive impact in Thailand. Compared to Scotland,

everything is completely different, which leads to tailored ideas and strategies that local stakeholders will continue long after the conference is over. Having a conference gives extra impetus for putting the spotlight on HPV in that location.

Chris acknowledged that having a passionate and energised local team is crucial to the process – she's been able to share learnings from Edinburgh and the Thai group responded on certain things and came up with new ideas. As Chris says, "It's a learning experience. And I think that if I do five of these events, then I'll be able to really speak to the recipe for success."

Of course, another important question is how all of this activity is funded. Chris admits that the legacy activity at conferences runs on a shoestring budget. Winning the Best Cities Impact Award would bring very welcome funds to really make a difference. 📌



Hannah Bennett
Festival Director

Crossed Wires

Building an event on a city's heritage

Crossed Wires is a three-day festival of live podcast recordings held in Sheffield, attracting around 20,000 ticket-holding attendees, 55% of whom come from outside South Yorkshire. In addition to the ticketed events, there are also free-to-join sessions, some hosted by the BBC.

After just two years, the festival can now call itself the largest podcast festival in the world, generating media coverage valued at £2.1 million. It's quite a success story for both the organisers and the city of Sheffield.

The Festival was founded by pals and broadcasting powerhouses Greg James and Alice Levine, alongside podcasting innovator Dino Sofos and live events maestro James O'Hara. James, a proud Sheffield resident, also helped found the city's much-loved Tramlines Festival, originally created to breathe life back into local bars and music venues that fell quiet during the summer university break.

Hannah and the team work closely with Sheffield City Council and Marketing Sheffield, and it's because of these strong relationships that Hannah feels they're able to get things done. The team has been able to access unused buildings and work alongside the council to ensure these buildings are accessible to the public.

The festival also receives funding from the South Yorkshire Mayor, which brings with it a commitment to meeting certain objectives. Hannah is particularly keen to grow community engagement within the festival. There have always been free elements, and using one particularly iconic city building

that closed down in 2021, but was reopened to the public during the festival for free events as it had a big positive impact locally.

From its first year, Crossed Wires has aimed to work with groups, individuals, and shows rooted in Sheffield's heritage. One highlight was a collaboration with BBC Radio Sheffield and Football Heaven, a much-loved local radio show, presented as a free-to-attend live podcast. Looking ahead, there are plans to work with schools and community groups to further increase local engagement and participation.

By hosting the festival in Sheffield, Hannah has found that the city's cultural heritage and history have added real value, becoming deeply entwined with the festival's identity. In 2025, one of the standout podcast recordings featured Greg James interviewing national treasure and proud Sheffield son, Michael Palin. While many of the podcasts and featured talent are globally recognised, Sheffield's character is consistently reflected and audiences clearly appreciate that. For example, when the BBC Shipping Forecast celebrated its 100th anniversary, the BBC produced a special Sheffield edition of the podcast during the festival.

Ultimately, the festival has become both an expression of and an amplifier for Sheffield's city brand. 📍



Carlena Limmer
Event Director

Duco Events

Working with a city partner to create impact with a successful sporting event

Duco Events is one of Asia Pacific's leading event management and sports promotion companies and, as Event Director, Carlena is keen to convey the company's "everyone needs to win" mentality. "Working symbiotically with all our partners and including the host city partner is incredibly important to us. So our host city is really where it starts. Once we've got an event idea then we look at where we think would be the most suitable city to host it and then we'll go and pitch to them. We might pitch to multiple cities depending on what the event is, or we might just go to one host city and say, what do you think of this?"

Christchurch is a valued partner for Duco Events, and Carlena mentioned specifically the T20 Black Clash event, where legends of New Zealand Cricket play the nation's stars of New Zealand Rugby, in a match of T20 Cricket. As Christchurch is very sports-centric, with fans of both sports and some really talented athletes coming from the region, it made sense to work together on this brand-new annual event idea eight years ago. As a key stakeholder, the city and Duco Events worked together to build the inaugural event and attract attendees both locally and nationally.

As Carlena says, "For us, making sure that it's successful for the city is important, in terms of visitation, in terms of visitor nights, in terms of the economic impact, and in terms of the customer satisfaction at the event. In addition, whether or not it makes those that live in the city proud to host events such as the T20 Black Clash." To build civic pride in the event, Duco Events worked with Christchurch



NZ to support the community and legacy impact, for example - inviting people who might have financial or other reasons that would usually prevent them attending the event: "We don't just give them a ticket – we invited a group to come along as a personal experience with the players too, to make it a better experience which no one can buy and so make them feel really special... We also make sure we're inclusive – including for people with disabilities. So for example where we invite a player mascot to run on to the field with the teams, we might invite someone with a mobility issue or disability so that they can feel that they can do it as well, they are included without limitation, but it's not just for that person, it's for everybody that's watching at the event and at →



As a business and the events industry as a whole, we need the host city relationships to be great for all of us. Everybody has to pull their weight and do their part to ensure that funding carries on for events.



home, to demonstrate the inclusive values. We work closely with the city on these ideas to demonstrate our own and the city's values."

Carlena is clear also that the event organiser can and should help the host city promote itself: "One of the things that we do with the host city, we have a broadcast associated with the event on free-to-air TV that is a huge ratings success. We always feature great B-roll footage of the host city with the commentators reading supplied bullets over in a really fun and engaging way. In addition to that, we get our talent to go along to film editorial content to showcase the city – we work with the host city on what locations we film as the backdrop to the

interviews, which attractions we should highlight, how they want to promote their city to the broadcast audience. She sees that cities are being more strategic about which events they host and if, as an event organiser, you're not working to help them deliver on those objectives then you won't get host city support in the future. She added, "You have to answer to the residents in the city. And if they're not able to deliver those economic benefits or the visitation or any of those key elements, then the city can't justify putting that money into events. As a business and the events industry as a whole, we need the host city relationships to be great for all of us. Everybody has to pull their weight and do their part to ensure that funding carries on for events." ♥

**Aubrey Walton**

Executive Director of Host Cities,
Commercial & Strategic Management
for FIFA World Cup 2026

FIFA

Tips for cities hosting mega events

Aubrey's experience is from the major event perspective, having worked with the NFL before and now working with FIFA on the delivery of the FIFA World Cup 2026. She's the conduit between FIFA and the city, working with the 16 host committees across Mexico, the US, and Canada to make sure that this one event comes together and works, and at the same time she is asking the question "what is the lasting impact for you as a city?"

In terms of delivering lasting impact, the hotel room nights booked and the hotel tax that comes with that is still a huge piece of the discussion, as is job creation to support the event and infrastructure build. She does try to communicate appropriately with each host city based on the goals they are aiming to reach and the politics they have to manage.

In terms of legacy impact and cities that do it well, Aubrey recalls working for the NFL and the Los Angeles Super Bowl Host Committee in 2022, when the NFL created the Business Connect program in LA – using all the local LGBTQ, diverse, and women-owned businesses as much as possible for vendor support. This is a program that Los Angeles continues with when hosting other major events. They've grown it into something that their community thrives on – and in Aubrey's opinion are probably the best at delivering this type of program.

Aubrey also talked about how Cleveland hosted the NFL Draft during COVID, inevitably a slightly different experience. But expectations of the event in that city were huge – based on NFL fandom, the history of the Cleveland Browns, and the journey the city was on – and the Mayor was closely involved in a lot of the decision making. Hosting the NFL Draft played a

part in getting funding for a new stadium, supported the building of new hotels, and provided support for communities. As Aubrey says, "It put Cleveland on the map and now they can show up for major events."

Aubrey is also clear that this impact is important for the NFL – when a city bids for the NFL Draft or any NFL event, the NFL doesn't just look at the cash: "When cities bid from a strategic, 'this is the difference the event will make' standpoint, this could impact on selection. Looking back at the Cleveland example, which focused on how winning the bid could lead to a new stadium and hotels, then the NFL would take into account what this means for the fans of the Cleveland Browns and for the NFL as a whole."

It is of course a big investment to host a major international sporting event and some cities are stepping back from opportunities. Aubrey can see both sides of this discussion, but would generally say that cities would be crazy not to also see and leverage the opportunity. "The piece that should sway the city is – what are the opportunities there? And how well you can define and leverage the opportunities depends on how well the organising committee sits within the city, what are the government politics, do politicians and hosting committees get on well, what's the flow of decision-making?"

Aubrey has four key pieces of advice for host cities who want to ensure that they leverage sporting events for a longer-term impact for their place reputation, economy, and community...



It further helped in putting Cleveland on the map and now they can show up for major events.

1 Align with your local governments on goals, budgets, timelines, elections etc. as the political decision-makers make a huge impact to local organising committees and what they can and can't do within the city from an operational perspective when major events come into town (eg: police, medical, event footprint, traffic patterns, signage, taxes, etc.).

2 Integrate the community within the major event. Major event organisers need to leave the host city better after the event than when they found it. This could mean many different things and also plays into the legacy conversation, eg: community members volunteer/work the event, build pitches/refurbish playgrounds/etc, create city murals, anything related to schools or education/youth sport programs, etc.

3 Cities that host major events have the opportunity to then continue to host other major events. In the Cleveland example, the NFL Draft was there in 2021. Since then, Cleveland Sports Commission/CVB has worked hard to get other major events like the 2022 NBA All-Star, USA Track & Field events, various sport NCAA events, WWE Summer Slam, WNBA team, new Cleveland Browns stadium, etc. Seeing how a city can host certain events gives the confidence of not only the host city but also the event organisers to bring their events to that same city, where that continues the growth of said city across a myriad of business opportunities.

4 Make sure that the hotel community is solid and ever-changing. All major events need room nights at various levels of hotels, so growth of the city is dependent on a good availability of hotel and venue offerings. 📍



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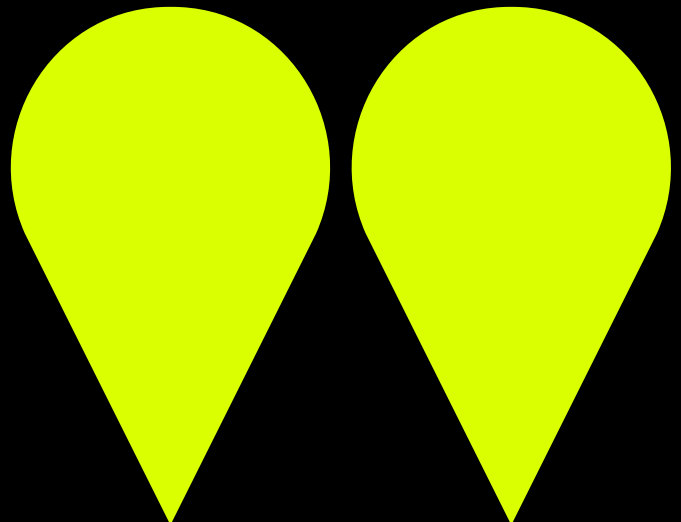
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Place perspectives



Ken Pereira
Head of Business Events

Tātaki Auckland Unlimited

Communicating the value of events to the place economy and place brand reputation

Tātaki Auckland Unlimited is Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's cultural, events, and destination agency and, as Head of Business Events, Ken is focused on promoting stronger connections between events and the region's economic development priorities. As an organisation, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited is also keen to understand global trends in business events, working with a global advisory group of senior stakeholders within business events around the world, who can provide the insights to help policy makers understand why it's important to connect economic ambitions to an events hosting strategy.

There is a close alignment with Committee for Auckland – an independent not-for-profit organisation with the purpose of elevating Auckland's position globally. Committee for Auckland provides the connections and partnerships where business, government and non-government organisations as well as community groups come together to promote cross-sector engagement around key issues.

For the past three years, Auckland has invested in an annual benchmarking report – The State of the City: Benchmarking Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's international performance. Initiated by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Committee for Auckland, and Deloitte, the report compares the city to nine 'peer' cities around the world. In the 2024 report, there was a clear line around conferences driving visitation numbers. Ken has taken that as a challenge to demonstrate that business events, in addition to driving visitation, can also be used to connect strategic city outcomes.

Ken and his team at Auckland Convention Bureau, the business events arm of Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, created the forum, Unleashing the Potential of Business Events, to demonstrate, in his words, that "conferences aren't just a visitation driver, they are also a strategic driver." This was a two-day event, with day one informing the industry on best practice globally and day two developed in partnership with the economic development team, sharing commissioned research to build understanding of the nuance of how events can connect sector priorities and to academia. Ken feels that event professionals and convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) are very good at talking to each other, asserting that "we need to find a way to connect with the general public, with policy makers, with academics, to demonstrate value." The Forum was an attempt to do this – the first taking place in 2024, with a plan to repeat this in 2027. The Forum initiative was written up by The Iceberg and their [takeaways](#) make interesting reading.

The event has had an impact, in Ken's view, accelerating his team's collaboration with economic development colleagues. "Business events are in the background. We facilitate the conversation, bringing opportunities that exist to the forefront. That's what we do. We also strategically invest in events within sectors that are important for targeted economic development and growth. So, for example, we've endorsed investment into Auckland Startup Week 2025, a tech and innovation focused event, and we're working to build that up in partnership with Auckland Council's Head of Sector Development." Ken shared another example of investing in →



Indigenous heritage is one of the key identity drivers for the city so we're leaning into that, we're curating a case study to try to understand some of the intangible outcomes from having this conference here.

a strategic event – working with the economic development team who have identified India as an important strategic partner and the need to build Indian connections. The business events team curated an event which brought together high-profile Indian diplomats and Auckland politicians.

There are clear criteria for providing subventions or financial support for business events, ensuring sector alignment as well as visitation. Ken adds, “Our message to our partners that invest in our destination program, the universities, our economic development colleagues, is – you tell us what’s important, we will find those connections, we’ll then invest and help you on that mission.”

As an example, Ken mentioned the World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education (WIPCE 2025), which is expected to bring nearly 4000 attendees to Auckland. “Indigenous heritage is one of the key identity drivers for the region so we’re leaning into that, we’re curating a case study to try to understand some of the intangible outcomes from having this conference here. Is this going to shift the dial on indigenous education? Can this case study demonstrate how events can deliver that impact?”

A new convention centre is being built in Auckland and the business events team is looking at what types of opportunities can be leveraged that will both support this new, world class asset and connect to some strategic city outcomes. The New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), opening in early 2026, is going to be a game changer for Auckland and New Zealand.

Auckland Convention Bureau, with support from Tourism New Zealand, is partnering with Christchurch on a three-year program to explore the legacy impact of events. Auckland has submitted some events that Ken and the team believe are of consequence so that the teams can work together to measure and understand the impact.

Ken echoed comments that have been made in many of the conversations that have informed this report. Association event organisers are often resource-stretched and the importance of legacy impact can often get lost. Ken believes it’s all about providing great examples. For instance, at the Forum, Auckland Convention Bureau invited the organiser of Oceania2035, an Agri-tech focused event, to share how they created, tracked and managed legacy outcomes from hosting this conference in Auckland ([Oceania 2035 - Case Study](#)).

For Ken, it’s all about socialising the idea and demonstrating best practice. “It’s important for event organisers to buy into this vision and understand that enduring legacy outcomes through impactful business events are very important to the region. And if you incorporate legacy impact measurement and tracking as part of your event, there may be city-backed investment into your event to help you deliver. It’s also important that we keep telling these stories to our region’s stakeholders, to our media, because business events is still a fairly small portfolio of the broader visitor economy.”

Tātaki Auckland Unlimited has taken the route of building legacy thinking into the team’s DNA rather than having a specific team focused on it separately. It has been looking at the mayor’s priorities for the region and is working on a strategic guide to understand where interventions will be focused. Having said that, with the new convention centre asset coming online, and increased availability of accommodation in the inner city, Ken is clear that the team must balance legacy aspirations with making sure there’s enough value for Auckland coming through visitation – visitation remains a viable measure of success especially as New Zealand’s aspirations are to double the value of tourism exports by 2034! ♥

Place perspectives



Paul Black
Head of Business Events

VisitBritain / VisitEngland

A national perspective on building and measuring the economic impact of business events

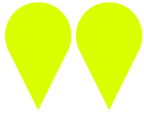
As Head of Business Events for VisitBritain/ VisitEngland, Paul is aware that traditionally, the mindset for measuring the success of hosting business events had been about 'heads on beds' and incremental spend, but the team at VisitBritain working with the industry understand that the impact goes far deeper and wider - particularly when those events represent a specific industry sector or have academic ambitions.

VisitBritain applies delegate spend values for association delegates, trade show delegates, corporate meeting delegates and incentive delegates. As Paul explains, this is "a value that we established following a national survey for domestic and international delegates which can be aggregated to calculate an estimate of spend based on average duration of stay for a specific type of business event." The business event team at VisitBritain/ VisitEngland uses these calculations to estimate the value of new business generated through their efforts to support and connect cities and destination partners with international event bookers and associations across their activities and networks.

eventIMPACTS, managed by UKSport, is an interface that can calculate the overall economic impact, GVA, and ultimately job creation for sporting and some cultural events. Paul believes something similar but bespoke to the nuances of different types of business events would be highly beneficial to drive stronger consistency on economic data reporting.

The business events ecosystem is complex with different subsectors, strategies, bookers, and influencers across each type of event, and is highly competitive in the international landscape. There are many UK and global industry associations who also work with their respective memberships to support work and advocacy within the business events industry. On a national destination management level, there are dedicated business event teams within Visit Scotland, Welsh Government, and VisitEngland who work with their destinations, city convention bureaux and event partners to promote and secure new business opportunities.

The business events team at VisitBritain perform a strategic and neutral role working in collaboration with each nation and their respective partners. This includes managing the [Business Events Growth Programme](#), a grant fund supporting single candidate destinations to bid for new international association events in priority sectors such as life sciences and technology, or support organisations to scale confirmed events and attract more international delegates. From April 2018 to March 2024, the Business Events Growth Programme resulted in £60.6 million in direct economic return to the UK economy with 91 business events supported in 18 cities across England, Scotland and Wales. For every £1 invested in the programme, the UK economy saw a return of £35.



When hosting an association conference, how do you widen the impact, how do you measure that, how do you have more robust storytelling and establish really strong stakeholder groups to maximise the opportunities of impact?

The business events team at VisitBritain has also focused on capacity building and education with key national stakeholders in important areas of transformation – notably on embedding wider impact indicators and strategies when bidding and hosting association congresses. This included their ‘Shape the Future of Events’ educational series which ran from 2022-2024, working with consultants GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT. The series included four main objectives.

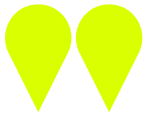
- 1** Cultivate destination impact experts who could adeptly define, measure, and communicate the positive impacts generated by business event activities - aligning them with organisational missions and visions, whilst mitigating environmental impacts.
- 2** Widen impact makers through creation of strong local organising committees / stakeholders to leverage the potential of convening experts in any given sector or academic area and subject of the congress.
- 3** Encourage cities and their stakeholders to transition from activity-driven strategies to purposeful, outcome-driven approaches, thereby delivering greater benefits to destination partners and host communities
- 4** Utilise these learnings to demonstrate to prospective associations the destination’s ability to fulfil mutually beneficial impact objectives when hosting their international congress; this is identified as a growing requirement in bid documents.

This work led to the development of the VB-BE Impactful Framework, designed to support UK convention bureaux in planning broader impact strategies with prospective association clients.

The framework considers more than 70 event indicators across eight key themes or “capitals”: financial, social, human, built, intellectual, cultural, political, and natural.

“The real opportunity of business events (particularly association congresses and trade shows) lies in its ability to support sectoral development in industry sectors, and drive innovation and intellectual outputs when convening global expert delegates.” Paul explained the nations and city convention bureaux are strong at aligning their sector and academic specialisms when targeting association congresses. For example, Liverpool will target specific association events in sectors such as life sciences, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and creative industries to name a few, and this is the same as many cities across Britain. “Many city convention bureaux have specialists and stakeholder groups to target specific international associations and convince them to host their congress in their destination. The VisitBritain ‘Shape the Future’ educational series and framework was developed to help city bid teams work collaboratively with associations to define, measure, and report on broader event impact objectives with greater intentionality.”

Paul believes that association needs are changing when it comes to business events; there is an increasing need to facilitate deeper knowledge-driven partnerships within prospective host destinations, as well as present substantive guidance on sustainability. The team at VisitBritain believe this capacity building work will ultimately support cities when bidding for new association congresses, particularly given the high competition from international destinations. Paul’s advice is that it is fundamentally important to have wider impact conversations early; understand the client mission and engage relevant local and national stakeholders.



There's so much opportunity: it's not about volume it's about what you do with it when you win it.

The business events team at VisitBritain has integrated elements of the VisitBritain BE-Impactful Framework into the application process of the Business Events Growth Programme. "We have asked prospective applicants to include wider impact objectives beyond the spend, plus sustainability policies alongside the preexisting qualifying criteria. This will take time to fully integrate and report on subsequent wider impacts, but we have already seen some excellent outcomes that go over and above the delegate spend. These include startup investment or inward investment deals (financial), new research and development partnerships (intellectual), community engagement, dedicated streams to support local students or professionals with career or development opportunities (financial-human)."

Two members of the eight strong business events team at VisitBritain/VisitEngland delivered these projects and had to strike a careful balance between working on this whilst delivering their primary function of destination promotion.

Paul admitted "If I'm really honest with myself, I think we slightly underestimated the amount of work it was and has become, even though it has been deeply gratifying working with our destination partners on this across the nations and because we know this is the direction the industry is heading."

Paul would love to see an impact manager in every city convention bureau but believes that it is equally critical to establish consistent engagement and advocacy across relevant government departments aligned with the event's sector. There's a need to tell the stories of impact more profoundly – it's easy to get an economic spend indicator, but harder to measure and report the broader picture of what these business events ultimately deliver when convening sector leaders in one destination. "Business events are not homogenous, they serve every sector and often tackle important areas that can accelerate sectoral development, innovation, communities and public policy." 📍

Further reading:

The 6-module course for CVBs, large venues and ABPCO members

[VisitBritain Business Events - Shape the Future of Events - Impact Design - Liverpool - January 2023](#)

[VisitBritain Business Events - Shape the Future of Events - Measuring Impact - Newcastle - March 2023](#)

Workshopping the learnings and framework with prospective clients

[VisitBritain Business Events Association Conference - Impact Beyond the Plenary - Edinburgh - February 24](#)

[VisitBritain Business Events Association Conference - Bid for Today, Bid for Tomorrow - ICC Wales - February 25*](#)

Here are two case studies of the Framework application

[UK Alzheimer's Research conference in Liverpool 2024](#)

[Case Study](#)

[International Congress of Infant Studies in Glasgow 2024](#)

[Case Study](#)

Place perspectives

**Dan Terris**

Head of Marketing & Brand

Karena Finnie

Head of Major Events

Christchurch NZ

A strategic approach to hosting major events to drive quality of life, brand reputation, and economic growth ambitions

Karena and Dan are both colleagues working for Christchurch NZ, which is the city's sustainable economic development agency.

Karena has headed up the major events team for Christchurch NZ for the past six years, having moved across from the Christchurch City Council where she was also involved in the bidding and attraction of sports events and looking after the community arts and events space. She was working on community-led, local community impact events through to national and international events that were of significant importance to the Christchurch community ahead of the establishment of Christchurch NZ.

The major events team works on all major events that receive funding which are hosted within the Christchurch City Council boundaries, allocating ratepayer investment, and supporting some events in the acquisition of partnerships and sponsors to help them host in the city. There is a separate team within Christchurch NZ focused on business events and conferencing and Karena is clear that these are quite different, driving a quite different purpose, with different outcomes and deliverables outside of ROI and visitor spend, but can be used as a catalyst to attracting a major event to the region (and vice versa).

Christchurch as a city has a major events strategy, defining a mega event as one that might happen every five or so years, requiring significant investment

and resource, likely to involve collaboration with and support from the New Zealand national government. The events strategy outlines the criteria for major events to receive funding support from Christchurch NZ and the Council. This states that events receiving funding are expected to be in line with and support the city's brand narrative and asks organisers to consider the legacy of the event, ie: the broader, longer-lasting local and national benefits. In addition, events must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1 Visitation: the event generates more than 6,000 visitor nights, or has 50% of its attendees from outside Christchurch, or international visitors make up more than 20% of total attendees or at least 3,000 visitor nights.

2 Sector alignment: the event has clear alignment with key sectors of interest: aerospace and future transport; health technology and resilient communities; food, fibre and agritech; high tech services; Antarctica.

3 Narrative and profile: domestic media interest or international media in key markets of interest, i.e. Australia, North America, Singapore, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, and Germany. Does the event offer an opportunity to profile the city beyond noting the event was held in Christchurch, and are the channels wide-reaching? e.g. free-to-air, or through an established social media channel.





When putting together a plan to bid for a major event, Christchurch NZ engages with many stakeholders in the city to ensure that there is a desire to host, that there's a clear potential to deliver benefit.



4 Community benefit: the event creates a legacy benefit through new and beneficial infrastructure or provides otherwise untapped participation in sport, active recreation or the arts.

Karena acknowledges that for some mega events, the rights fees are prohibitively high. They work closely with national sports organisations and the New Zealand major events (through MBIE) team to scope out the feasibility of hosting and supporting events, determining at that stage what the best outcome would be for the city. Karena pointed out that different national sports organisations have their own different objectives – some will be looking for youth events, others for elite events. The decision-making process on what to bid for is very strategic.

Thinking of some examples of major events and their legacy impact, Karena mentioned...

- The infrastructure legacy of the 2015 Cricket World Cup, which saw the development of Hagley Oval for the city's community to enjoy but also to enable the city to host further events, including the 2022 (moved from 2021) Women's Cricket World Cup. Through the dedication of the Canterbury Cricket Trust a fundraising drive was implemented to support with the funding of the installation of permanent lighting infrastructure at the Oval, which again added value to the city's ability to host events not only for this World Cup but for future events at the Oval





Whilst we're hosting SailGP, are there opportunities to host a conference/business event that aligns to marine life conservation, or sustainability, etc, so that everything ties together to amplify the effectiveness?

- Hosting the international sailing competition Sail GP and leveraging this event to create a Marine Mammal Management Plan. The city's academics and researchers were able to engage with the organisers to highlight a particular endangered species – the Hector's dolphin. New competition regulations were introduced to allow boats to stop racing if a dolphin were in the vicinity and there were additional activations and activities built in around the event to support the conservation efforts. This partnership also supported the city's brand narrative, the connection with mana whenua – the Māori rights to the land and the cultural responsibility to care for the land and sea.
- Karena and Dan also both mentioned the work being done ahead of hosting the Supercars Championship next year, where the alignment with a key economic sector was a crucial factor in the hosting decision, and where there will be projects promoting and celebrating women in the industry alongside potentially STEM projects in engineering.

When putting together a plan to bid for a major event, Christchurch NZ engages with many stakeholders in the city to ensure that there is a desire to host, that there's a clear potential to deliver benefit, and Karena stresses that this is forefront when working with the event organisers. If they are not interested in working towards these objectives, whether they be around sustainability, or cultural or societal impact, or innovation and economic development, then maybe that event is not right for the city. She does believe that event organisers are becoming more aware of the potential to leverage their events and create legacy benefits beyond purely hosting the event.

An advantage of having such a clearly articulated major events strategy is that Karena does see event organisers doing their homework and referencing the potential for leveraging their events to drive particular economic sectors when they are bidding for support to the city. Unlike some other places



we have interviewed for this project, there isn't a separate team or person focused on "legacy impact". Within Christchurch NZ, the major events team are able to liaise closely with the innovation and business growth team to make the right connections. She commented, "don't get me wrong, not every event works in that way and it does take a certain level of event to be able to have the capability and capacity to be able to deliver that." The structure of Christchurch NZ also means that the major events team can liaise closely with the business events team to say, for example, "whilst we're hosting SailGP, are there opportunities to host a conference/business event that aligns to marine life conservation, or sustainability, etc, so that everything ties together to amplify the effectiveness?"

From the brand perspective, Dan talked through his team's approach to ensuring that major events are leveraged to build the city's reputation. Again, →



Communicating the benefits post-event is key – Dan and Karena’s teams coordinate on this and include research on how the event has impacted on awareness of Christchurch, the livability of the city, and the likelihood of doing business.

being part of the same organisation supports better collaboration. Dan has a marketing manager for major events who works closely with Karena’s team through every stage of planning and implementation and can also tap into the expertise of colleagues on the marketing team focused on the innovation, business, and growth work that Christchurch NZ is doing. As a team, everyone is clear from the start of the objectives – is this for pure broadcast, or is it more for leverage and legacy? This provides needed clarity to the marketing strategy.

Marketing might focus on the infrastructure legacy that adds to the city’s story: for example, Christchurch hosted Crankworx in 2024 at the Christchurch Adventure Park. New tracks were created for the event, and this has created an additional product draw for visitors. There is also the broadcast opportunity related to major events: when hosting SailGP, Dan’s team ran brand narrative videos and key messaging throughout the broadcast, with storytelling around the Marine Mammal Management Plan to emphasise the city’s values of caring for the land and sea. At a previous motor racing event, Supersprint, the first hydrogen powered racing car was launched, and the team were able to leverage this to tell the story of a Christchurch-based start-up that was involved in hydrogen-powered vehicle development.

Around the world we do see some kickback from residents to the hosting of major events which can be seen as disruptive and impacting negatively on quality of life, but when asked whether communication strategies also needed to be internally focused to the Christchurch community, Dan and Karena both commented that this does not seem to be an issue in Christchurch. With the city getting back to where it used to be before the 2011 earthquake and then COVID the citizens are keen to see more events, more vibrancy, and this focus on culture and vibrancy is a brand value for the city. Dan did stress that they still see it as a priority to

bring the community on the journey and ensure that the economic benefits are felt locally. SailGP again provides an example of this, taking place at Lyttelton Harbour about 20-minutes drive from the city centre, where steps were taken to ensure that visitors stayed in the area to dine and spend.

Communicating the positive impact of events is key. Karena’s team works with Fresh Info, a NZ based company with an Event Economics impact tool that collects data to provide an understanding of the usual measures [visitation, bed nights, event satisfaction] and also looks beyond that to visitor perceptions, livability, and the social benefits. It also measures the costs, including team time spent on the project, to provide an effectiveness equation. Dan’s team carry out an annual survey with residents, the broader population of New Zealand, and the Australian market, and through this they invite ratings of different cities as event hosts, seeing Christchurch’s ranking on a steady rise. They also measure resident pride and can see that scores are rising and that events are driving resident pride.

We discussed the other common challenge to long-term planning for place brand strategies – the political landscape. Karena feels fortunate that they now have a 10-year plan for investment into major and community events, compared to the last five years where they were working on a year-by-year basis. This longer-term perspective provides the opportunity to do the best job in terms of developing, delivering and communicating the benefits of each event. She believes that this will ensure that the business and resident community will support their work and this will provide security if there is political change. Communicating the benefits post-event is key – Dan and Karena’s teams coordinate on this and include research on how the event has impacted on awareness of Christchurch, the livability of the city, and the likelihood of doing business. 📍

Place perspectives

Sally-Ann O'Brien
Business Events Manager

Christine Roche
Business Events Office

Fáilte Ireland

Building reputation and implementing legacy impact in line with economic and social priorities

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority of Ireland and Christine and Sally-Ann are part of the Business Events team, with a primary focus on sustainability and social impact. They liaise very closely with the Dublin Convention Bureau and also regional convention bureaux in their five Business Events hubs around Ireland.

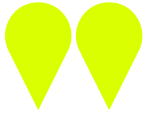
Ireland's new business events strategy has three ambitions: economic – to realise the value of business events; social – to contribute to building stronger communities; and environmental – to meet high sustainability standards in business events. Whilst their colleagues on the Associations team are interested in economic KPIs [e.g. lead generation, heads on beds, and other measures of immediate economic value] Sally-Ann and Christine are focused on integrating and measuring considerations of social and environmental impact.

On the environmental impact side, the team are developing a Green Toolkit to help conference organisers design and deliver conferences with sustainability best practice at their core. The team has also launched a carbon calculator for business events, with a KPI to work with a number of conferences before the end of the year to measure their carbon footprint. These measurements will then serve as benchmarks for future events. As Sally-Ann says, "We're focused on how we can mitigate the footprint and amplify the handprint." The team have been working with key strategic partners to develop an impact and legacy framework, to help

them work with conference organisers to define, manage, measure, and communicate the societal impacts of conferences. They are currently using this framework on three pilot conferences where intentional impact projects are taking place in 2025 and 2026.

To date, the process of deciding which events to pilot has been based on a number of factors. Fáilte Ireland has a Conference Ambassador Programme, sector leaders or influencers in their field who, as Irish representatives of international associations, are well placed to bring international conferences to Ireland. The team have recognised that it's essential to work with Conference Ambassadors who have completely bought in to the concept of delivering additional or local impact through the conference. They have ongoing engagement with Conference Ambassadors and as such, they have been able to identify those who "get it" when selecting which conference they will propose partnership with on international impact projects. It's also important that the parent association – the European, international or global team – is on board with impact projects and that they see this as a core value of their conference programme.

The third factor in choosing which conferences to work with is Ireland's policy and social priorities. For example, housing is a very topical issue in Ireland, so hosting the International Social Housing Festival was relevant to the government's own priorities. The legacy project has centred on gathering real-life →



Ultimately, it's about positioning Ireland on the global stage as a business events destination that has a huge emphasis on being sustainable, and is leveraging business events as a catalyst for positive environmental and social change.



stories from tenants of social housing in Ireland to add to the sector's understanding – a project that will be continued in all future host destinations, for all future iterations of the conference. [[Find out more here](#)]

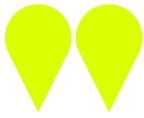
Fáilte Ireland sits under the Department of Enterprise, Tourism, and Employment, and this puts them in a good position to influence policies, and to liaise with the other government departments who really understand the benefits of hosting international business events to support their strategic objectives.

Whilst the potential value of connecting the hosting of events to broader policy and economic

objectives is clear, Sally-Ann stresses that getting this approach right is also important for the nation's brand reputation in the world of business events. "Ultimately, it's about positioning Ireland on the global stage as a business events destination that has a huge emphasis on being sustainable, and is leveraging business events as a catalyst for positive environmental and social change." The ICCA Meeting Needs Survey in 2023 showed that 44% of international associations are incorporating sustainability and legacy into their RFPs. Christine stressed that for each of the pilot projects, there is a communication strategy in place to tell the story and amplify the achievements.

For this reason too, it's important for the team





I could not believe the amount of different stakeholders that are being brought around a table.

to plan their process and approach after this pilot period. Fáilte Ireland supports more than 400 business events each year and they don't have the resources to work with every conference organiser. The previously described selection criteria will continue to be important, however the team are also trying to find ways to support conference organisers on impact projects by providing them with the tools and training to enable them to define and measure the impact of their own conferences.

Sally-Ann and Christine chatted through other challenges that they are currently working through, including that of measuring social impact. The question is, when do you stop? You measure in the first year of course but the impact could be felt many years after the conference has taken place. As an example, the WONCA World Rural Health Conference took place in Limerick in 2022, and the team have been working to measure the social impact. Only a few weeks ago there was a new development, and a positive impact was tracked back three years to that conference.

Fáilte Ireland defines social impact as a benefit delivered for the local community as a result of the conference; a benefit or impact that makes the destination a better place to live, work in, or visit. Measurement is a potential minefield and they are gaining insights, learning, and upskilling the team (and stakeholders) as they go.

The second challenge that Sally-Ann and Christine highlighted is something that they also see as an opportunity - and that's stakeholder mapping. "I could not believe the amount of different stakeholders that are being brought around a table".

It's a challenge to get the local Conference Ambassador and organising committee to understand the breadth of stakeholders that should be engaged - whilst government and policy advisers, business sector or academic



representatives could be seen as obvious stakeholders, it's also about including, for example, different local community groups. The team see this as a real positive: the process opens up all these other doors and spreads the understanding of what a two- or three-day business or academic conference can deliver for the community.

Fáilte Ireland are being supported on their intentional impact pilot projects by external partners, but the next challenge is to work out how to deliver the approaches they are learning once the pilot stage is over. Working on impact and legacy for the conferences they host is labour intensive, and therefore expensive, and so how do they develop a model that's going to make it workable? Do they transfer the skills learned to their colleagues on the Associations team, those that focus on economic targets, for example? Sally-Ann and Christine are conscious that this is something many other destinations at this stage of the journey are discussing. And also, how do you present this work to your government stakeholders to increase understanding and to secure the future of the strategy in case of possible government change? 📍

Place perspectives



Matthias Schultz
Managing Director

German Convention Bureau Taking an AI-driven approach to attracting business events and aligning them with key economic strengths

The German Convention Bureau has taken a tech-driven approach to connecting the business events they host with the country's economic strengths and ambitions. The team had run a survey which showed that 83% of event planners, especially in scientific conferencing, are looking for destinations which fit with their expertise.

As Matthias sums up, "If I run a conference on the subject of renewable energy, I look at a destination which has a university which teaches in renewable energies, I look for factories which produce solar panels, for example, or I look for companies or politicians who can support this event." And so that was the initial thinking behind the Germany Expertise or Kompetenzfelder Strategie initiative over a decade ago, guided by clusters defined by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs – a database or mapping of the scientific and economic expertise in the country.

The convention bureau approaches this strategy from two perspectives. First, they leverage competence fields in both business and science to attract conferences and secondly, they have built a database that includes recurring events in Germany, which are assigned to specific competence fields, even if the venue is not yet determined. This enables the team to match events with destinations and themes effectively, and to work with the Federal Ministry of the Economy and Germany Invest to focus on six specific fields of expertise which are targeted for development. The continuation of these measures

is managed at the local level, with cities directly engaging with the event organisers.

AI has introduced new opportunities and so the German Convention Bureau has collaborated with the German National Tourist Office on an open data project, combining all the data on business events infrastructure with all the data on academic and business expertise. As an event organiser, you will see a map of Germany where all the destinations are highlighted which offer knowledge and expertise in your subject, and which also shows you the infrastructure offer in terms of convention centres, hotels, transport etc. This will go live in October or early November 2025.

The German Convention Bureau is an active member of the Strategic Alliance of the National Convention Boards of Europe, a collaborative group of 29 national convention bureau, and they are sharing this approach with the rest of Europe. The ambition is to gather data from across Europe to create a Europe wide offering for international conference organisers. Matthias explains that, "Essentially, we are building a highway but anyone can use it, and you can use it to build your own business model." 📍

Place perspectives

**Karla Cunningham**

Senior Conventions Support Manager

Helen Davidson

Sales Manager

Glasgow Convention Bureau

Sharing best practice and encouraging first steps in delivering positive impacts

Opening our conversation, Helen confirmed that the sales team focus their attention on bidding for conferences that align with the city's overall economic strategy – recognising that this is common to most cities. For Glasgow, there are a number of sectors that the city has highlighted, given strengths in academia or local business, including life sciences, engineering, and the space sector and so they would expect to have more success in attracting events in those sectors. Success in this strategy in itself delivers a positive impact. As Karla says, "There's a big chain following hosting a conference in one of those sectors - we've had conferences in the past where we've had delegates come to the city and people have then applied to work at that particular university because they've been so impressed with the research and the work that they've done." But to step up the positive impact, the Convention Bureau team is keen to, as Karla says, "take advantage of the fact that we've got some of the world's greatest minds meeting in the city and making sure that if there is an opportunity for them to engage with the city outside the walls of the conference, that they can do so and that they can make some kind of difference to the people of Glasgow."

Karla and Helen are part of a team of six within the Glasgow Convention Bureau specifically focused on developing legacy or positive impact projects with event organisers. In common with some of the other interviewees in this report, Karla recognises that there can be barriers when getting conference organisers to deliver positive impact projects, "I think they've got so much going on in their lives

organising a conference that it seems like a big daunting challenge when you start bringing up impact." So her team's approach is to suggest smaller ideas: "We'll say - look, do something for the first time, do something small in Glasgow, let's just try something - and then I guess our hope is that it does actually go beyond this year and beyond Glasgow. So like try a wee public engagement event or a small careers event in Glasgow and I guess our hope is that if they then rotate around different destinations in future they actually take that legacy on beyond us."

The team also aim to provide the resources that enable conference organisers to consider positive impact projects. Whether that's providing a free venue for a fringe event or making the right connections to a local charity already working with ideas in their sector. The team have actually set up a network of voluntary and charity groups and had events to bring them together to share ideas for how conferences in the city could be leveraged.

Helen and Karla are clear that it's important to share ideas and experiences even within the Convention Bureau team. A report has been produced outlining the various events and associated activities that have been delivered over the past 10 years to share best practice – the Glasgow Impact Directory. This leads back to the discussion of the challenge of measuring impact. Karla feels that there can be too much emphasis on trying to achieve a numerical measurement which can detract from some of the other outcomes. She mentioned the project associated with a paediatric sleep conference, →

Place perspectives



where the children in the hospital created artworks from pillowcases summing up what sleep meant to them – when they brought these into the conference room, “the Ambassador just said something so powerful, he was just saying that patients had a voice in this conference for the first time ever, and that was an amazing outcome, but not one you can measure numerically.” The team are therefore thinking through how to measure or report on outcomes.

Helen and Karla also mentioned that residents have been surveyed on their attitudes to tourism and the major events hosted in the city – this did not cover business events but the results provided a positive indicator of residents’ understanding of the positive impact of events...

- **90%** strongly/tend to agree that Glasgow was a welcoming place for visitors
- **83%** agreed the city was a great place to visit
- **92%** agreed that tourism improved the local economy
- **90%** liked to see visitors in Glasgow
- **86%** would like to see more visitors coming to the city
- UCI Cycling World Championships:
84% of respondents were aware of the event,
74% anticipated it would have a positive effect on Glasgow 📍

Place perspectives



David Noack Perez
Director



Jorge Treceno Pachon,
Congress Manager Legacy

Madrid Convention Bureau

Creating tools and connections to facilitate legacy impact

The BestCities Global Alliance is a community of 13 premier destinations who collaborate amongst themselves, with clients and with their partners to create a positive impact through business events. The BestCities Global Forum was held in Madrid in 2021, and from that event came the BestCities Madrid Challenge, a movement of destinations and associations that recognize the importance of shifting the meetings and events industry towards a more sustainable model. And so when speaking with David and Jorge from the Madrid Convention Bureau, we could be fairly certain that their organisation is one that believes in the power of events to deliver impact in a more sustainable way. Madrid was also named the World's Leading Meetings and Conference Destination at the World Travel Awards in 2024.

Our conversation covered many of the associated challenges, together with ideas that the Madrid team are developing to help solve these.

In David's experience, there is not yet a great deal of demand from association event organiser clients to develop legacy projects in Madrid – there is interest, but not necessarily the knowledge or ideas on the client side. The team have therefore been proactive in developing tools to support their clients and encourage the development of positive impact projects.

On the [Convention Bureau's website](#), you can find several reports and documents for event organisers, including...

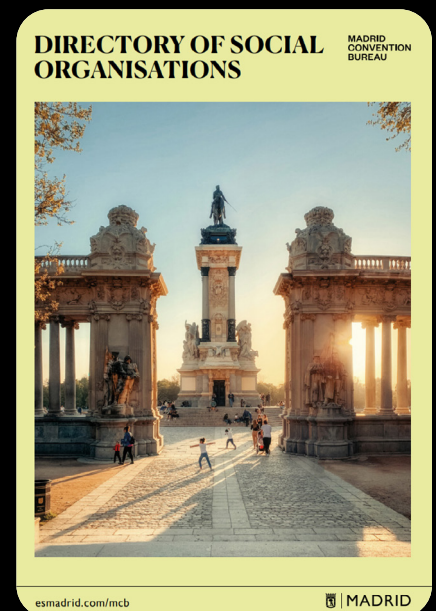
- Madrid, Creating Legacy in Your Meeting – a guide that encourages events held in the city to leave a positive and lasting impact in the community
- 100 Ideas to Celebrate Sustainable Events in Madrid – practical recommendations to make events more environmentally and socially responsible, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals
- Directory of Social Organisations – a list of associations, foundations, and NGOs working in areas such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility, social inclusion, and other related fields in Madrid
- PLUS, positive impact – a tool that will allow event organisers to manage the sustainability and legacy of their events

Another aspect of the proactive approach is that, whilst the Madrid Convention Bureau does not provide subvention funding or sponsorship for congresses, or provide any funds direct to the Association, they do support impact actions financially.

Place perspectives



We have to identify the mission and the vision of the association. We have to try to see the challenges that they are engaged with, and then try to identify stakeholders or partners in the city.



As with many of the interviewees we spoke with for this project, Jorge did suggest that working with event organisers to identify, develop, and deliver legacy opportunities can be a stretch on resources. He said that often event clients will not have a specific idea, but will want to do something positive, “We have to identify the mission and the vision of the association. We have to try to see the challenges that they are engaged with, and then try to identify stakeholders or partners in the city.” Jorge’s team often have to present a fully developed project idea.

As an example of a project that has been delivered, Jorge shared the example of the European Haematology Association. Jorge’s team have a partnership with the Spanish Red Cross which has often been able to support legacy projects. They have developed a campaign which is now offered to other congresses, called “Share knowledge, share life” – essentially a plasma and blood donation campaign. They supply mobile donation units in the Congress Centre and this has led to very positive feedback

from locals, who see that these visitors to Madrid are donating blood for use in the community.

Jorge and the team find it easier to describe these as “positive impacts” as opposed to “legacy projects”, a term which implies a longer-term commitment. The term “positive impacts” also works with Madrid stakeholders and the community, emphasising that events deliver positive impacts beyond just the immediate heads on beds revenue. In a sense, it provides a social licence for hosting events in the city.

Communicating the value of events is important and David and Jorge admit there is still a way to go, in that there is a lack of understanding of how events can help the city meet its wider economic ambitions. The team are again being proactive and for the past 18 months have been working to identify key industries and industry stakeholders in Madrid, to approach them and offer to work with them to attract the key events that would support their growth. 📍



Rory Archibald
Senior Business Events Manager

Visit Scotland

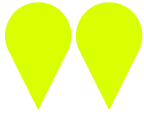
The national DMO's perspective on supporting alignment between business events and economic ambitions

The subtle shift in the way that Visit Scotland describes itself suggests the developing approach of the national organisation to attracting visitors and hosting events. VisitScotland used to describe itself as a destination marketing agency but now identifies as an economic growth agency, positioning itself alongside Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International as focused on economic growth. As Rory Archibald, Senior Business Events Manager with Visit Scotland explains, "This means making sure that the people of Scotland are the number one priority when discussing tourism strategy, focusing on job support, job creation, and looking at how tourism benefits local communities. And with regards to business events, conferences and conventions, the objective is to find ways to leverage the expertise of those attending the conference and to showcase Scottish expertise to the international attendees – creating a knowledge exchange and promotion opportunity".

The team are particularly keen to find platforms to showcase the financial tech and renewable energy expertise, amongst other strengths, that are in Scotland. The Transformation Protocol is an organisation with around 33 members, including innovation centres, research centres, national institutions, and social enterprises and Visit Scotland can leverage this network to secure, for example, letters of support and introduction, to ensure that the economic and legacy impact of an event is not just limited to the host city but can also be Scotland wide.

Legacy is clearly not the number one priority for all conferences. Visit Britain holds an annual conference every year where they bring associations in with selected CVBs and the national organisations including Visit Scotland and Rory is clear that this conference has included association leader speakers saying it's not a priority, and that they don't have the resource. Visit Scotland will lead on it where it's possible, providing connections into the Transformation Protocol, and/or into Government, and/or into academic institutions, but recognise that you can't force it, and if nothing else the information exchange in the room is valuable. An impact could also be simply supporting delegates to extend their stay.

The Visit Scotland business events team's KPIs are based on the numbers of enquiries that are generated every year for the cities and other stakeholders. VisitScotland is also currently looking at how to broaden these KPIs to look at the social impact of business events. Rory suggested that "It's very difficult to actually put that KPI down, that measurement on impact, legacy and community involvement and I don't think there's a destination out there that has completely nailed it" and he feels that it would be difficult or perhaps unwise to create a standardized way of setting out and measuring those KPIs for legacy and impact, as priorities and objectives will be different for different destinations and event organisers.



I think that's where we learn the most as human beings, when mistakes happen or when you think I wish I'd done it this way – and that will help us grow as Scotland and hopefully as an industry as well.

VisitScotland are looking at projects where they can monitor how legacy takes place: exploring what questions are being asked before the event even comes to Scotland, what happens during the event, and then looking to connect with local ambassadors, industry, and academic leaders six months, a year, two years afterwards to see if things have progressed. Rory believes it's important to look at the successes and also the failures, "I think that's where we learn the most as human beings, when mistakes happen or when you think I wish I'd done it this way – and that will help us grow as Scotland and hopefully as an industry as well."

Rory shared, as further reading, the impact report produced by the World Congress of Soil Science, which has some rich storytelling and data and also demonstrates the breadth of possibility for an association conference: available to read [HERE](#).

The other challenge in terms of measuring impact and more importantly telling the story of the positive impact of events [and in fact tourism] is the funding and resource available to deliver this.

Rory is very clear that destination teams need to work out ways to deliver this storytelling around the positive impact – to both government and to their citizens. The data won't do this on its own: "It's very difficult to quantify what the economic benefit from a conference means to the daily lives of those living in the area, especially in times where the cost of living is increasing." If it's beneficial for the city and the country, they want the stories. Rory wants to explore more effective and assertive ways of getting there, adding that, "The stories we want to tell are about the community engagement. How did hosting a healthcare conference lead to an uptake in a vaccine? How did hosting a disability conference lead to accessible changing rooms being installed in airports and public spaces?"

Controversially, Rory doesn't believe that legacy is absolute rocket science, "Some of the legacy impacts are amplifying what the association is already doing and discussing in your city and taking that information to the local community. Once you connect people up they can be incredibly excited about it and engage with it and so as a destination or as a city, it can come around naturally." 📍

Place perspectives



Emma France
Business Tourism Manager

Marketing Sheffield

Leveraging major events, home-grown festivals, and business events to build the city's brand reputation and deliver social and economic impact

Sheffield, situated in the North of England, has played host to some of the UK's biggest events in recent years, from Women's Euros 2022 and the Rugby League World Cup, to the 2024 MOBO Awards, and most recently, the third leg of the Tour of Britain. The city is also the host of a number of home-grown festivals. from DocFest, which has been in the city for over 30 years, to Tramlines, one of the UK's longest running, city-based music festivals, and the more recently launched podcast festival, Crossed Wires, which attracts producing and performing talent from across the UK and beyond. The city also has a strong track-record for bidding for and hosting a range of world-leading conferences, including the International Coeliac Disease Symposium and the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons conference.

The city has recently announced a new 10 year major events strategy, led by the City Council with Marketing Sheffield, the major events, culture, and CVB bidding teams, and other key city stakeholders involved in the planning. The objective is to ensure that events held in the city are of a real benefit in terms of economic impact and community benefits. The aim is to identify opportunities across sports, business and culture and find events that Sheffield is a good fit for, and that are also a good fit for Sheffield and the city's ambitions.

Emma France heads up the team at Marketing Sheffield, which is responsible for developing and amplifying the Sheffield city brand through a ream of activities and strong stakeholder engagement. She liaises with city teams, business events ambassadors, international event organisers, and all stakeholders to ensure the city achieves the maximum benefit from hosting events.

Major events and the media reach they provide are seen as an important opportunity to promote Sheffield, but Emma concedes that what you are able to achieve does depend on the event organiser and how much control they have over all messaging, as well as on the budget you have available. She mentioned that, when hosting the Women's Euros, UEFA [the European Football Association] controls all communications, but when hosting the Snooker World Championships, they were able to showcase the new "Sheffield Inspires" brand.

Hosting the MOBO Awards [Music Of Black Origin], provided a great example of an event that has inspired the city to work on community impact. The MOBO organisation has a social purpose, which is about creating positive change, increasing representation, and providing a platform for talent. These values align with the city's values and so the city developed a series of fringe events that put the spotlight on the next generation of Sheffield's musicians and performers, and saw thousands of →

Place perspectives



children explore black music and culture. [You can see a report on the activations around this event [HERE](#)].

Emma is also looking forward to Sheffield hosting the European Figure Skating Championships in January 2026 – she anticipates a huge media reach with which to showcase Sheffield and the Sheffield Inspires brand, and there are also plans for community engagement and impact projects.

In terms of annual festivals, Emma is happy to celebrate the success of the recently launched UK podcast festival, Crossed Wires, sharing that in just its second year 55% of attendees came from outside of Sheffield and South Yorkshire. She added, “We support this with a small grant and support with marketing and logistical elements (signage, use of public spaces etc). The Festival is a great fit with the Sheffield City of Festivals branding and the city is developing as a hub for podcast creation, so we can shine the spotlight on that.” The Festival was launched by a Sheffield-born podcast creator who had been working in London for many years on some of the UK’s leading podcasts and felt his home town was the right place to launch the event – as Emma says, “It’s a nice Sheffield inspires story too!”

Sheffield has a long-established business events ambassador network which has been presented as a best practice model by VisitBritain. This is a strategic engagement with Sheffield’s universities, hospitals, healthcare sector, and other business sectors. Sheffield has good venues but not a dedicated convention centre with large exhibition space, and lacks the international connectivity of other larger cities in the UK. Despite this, Sheffield still has the ambition to attract international events and promote their strengths on the global stage – so this ambassador network is essential.

There’s so much going on in Sheffield and, as is so often the truth in place branding and marketing, the team is lean and resources are tight. Sheffield’s strategy focuses on economic and community impact and Emma’s team is keen to deliver this. Rather than have a separate team or person focused on discussing legacy impact with event organisers, they aim for it to be part of the operational DNA. They have created resource materials for their ambassador network to share and use to develop ideas for potential connections and projects.

Emma shared a couple of stories of positive impact from business or association conferences...

The Child Health Technology Conference was led by a conference ambassador from the Sheffield Children’s NHS Foundation Trust, which has created a global community of experts in child health technologies. This collaboration has supported the creation of the National Centre for Child Health Technology which is currently under construction on Sheffield’s Olympic Legacy Park.

Also led by a conference ambassador, the 20th International Symposium on Coeliac Disease (which attracted 600 delegates from 38 countries) took place in Sheffield, which delivered the first ‘free of gluten’ conference centre. The team also managed a project which enabled 200 local sufferers of Coeliac disease able to interact with the international specialists.

The Marketing Sheffield team are keen to measure positive impact and work with measurement templates provided by Sport England and VisitEngland. Emma adds that “Whilst these are not necessarily aligned to local economic multipliers as they use UK averages, often it’s useful to have this template approach to compare with other UK cities. You also work with these national bodies when it comes to attracting events.” 📍

Place perspectives



Elke Wong
Deputy Director



Dinah Seng
Senior Manager

Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau, Singapore Tourism Board Aligning MICE ambitions with the national vision for sustainability

For the Singapore conventions team, the economic impact of events is still the key driver for their strategic approach to growing MICE revenues. However, as Elke Wong explained, at the same time there are nationwide government targets for sustainability, the Singapore Green Plan 2030, and every ministry and statutory board has to play its part, adding, “Sustainability covers so many things, including environmental and social sustainability, which is why legacy impact has become more important to us.”

Dinah added that the Singapore Tourism Board also has a Tourism 2040 roadmap, and so has very big ambitions, “We want to triple our MICE impact [against 2019 revenues] and so how do we do it in a sustainable manner, ensuring that our communities are engaged meaningfully?” This is where working on the legacy impact of events can play an important part - engaging the local communities to ensure that the impact of such events creates something positive for the community.

The Singapore Tourism Board has created a MICE Legacy Toolkit, firstly in response to demand as they are aware that surveys suggest that more event organisers are looking for this, and secondly as they could see that some organisers need more support. As Dinah says, “We realised as well, through our work with associations, that everybody is at a different place when it comes to thinking about legacy. Some of them are very mature, some of them are still at the early stage where they’re interested

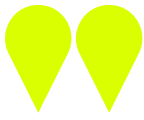
in it and they’ve heard about it. So we really wanted to bridge that knowledge gap and it also helps us in terms of how we can work with associations and event organisers.”

The toolkit apparently works really well when an association event organiser is at the earlier stages of understanding legacy impact – it gives them something to read and consider before they come back to the convention bureau on how they’d like to proceed.

Dinah leads on legacy impact projects – she distils information and ideas to the rest of the team who then have the initial conversations and identify the potential for projects and then Dinah steps in to develop and implement. Elke explains, “Dinah is only one person, it would be quite impossible to do everything on her own. So she drives the strategy, she does the formulating or refining of proposals together with the other business development managers. But for them, because they hold the relationship as well as the understanding of each event more intimately, we rely on them as well to then influence their associations to come on board.”

Legacy impact differs from sector to sector, although the Singapore team do have certain board goals that they’d like to focus on. Right now the focus is on amplifying the environmental and socioeconomic sustainability focus – local business amplification and accessible tourism.





Bidding for these events is not easy and sometimes the big events take multiple years to decide and it involves us really highlighting what value Singapore can add.

Dinah and Elke shared the example of the Worldchefs Congress. The team integrated the local industry, involved Singapore's Michelin-starred chefs alongside the international talent, elevating the local culinary sector, and also putting together a fund raising project that raised about SGD \$ 1.8M for the National Kidney Foundation, which directly benefitted Singapore's healthcare system and the patient community. They also partnered with industry leaders like Nestlé on working with children to teach nutrition, meal preparation etc. The Singapore Tourism Board provided a case study [HERE](#).

Singapore does offer subvention funding to event organisers and the eligibility criteria already incorporates sustainability factors. The measurement of legacy and impact currently relies heavily on the associations themselves. The team work with their clients to help ensure there's a measurement structure in place and often check in with them one or two years later on this too.

Dinah and Elke recognise that there will always be challenges working with different government teams, but having a top down goal that crosses all ministries and industries helps – ie: the sustainability goals. Whilst it's still sometimes difficult to reach the right people in the right department – and when they do, they may have bandwidth or resource issues - having that ultimate unifying goal helps. It gives the team the licence to make those approaches.

The Singapore Tourism Board is very targeted on what is practical and pragmatic for the country. There are industries identified for focused growth and the team work with the various government agencies and research institutions to identify the associations that they wish to work with. This ensures that the events brought into Singapore don't just contribute to the economic impact but also to academic inflows, talent inflows, and ideas exchange to support the various communities.



The Singapore Tourism Board liaises with the Singapore Economic Development Board to understand the trends, and the new sectors that are growing and should be targeted. The economic development board has a global footprint and so it can help attract the important business events that could or might want to grow in Asia. The economic development team also propose ambassadors that the convention bureau can leverage when proposing speakers for international events. As Dinah commented, "Bidding for these events is not easy and sometimes the big events take multiple years to decide and it involves us really highlighting what value Singapore can add."

Elke's final piece of advice for other DMOs or CVBs at the early stages of planning is to offer, encourage, or implement legacy projects alongside the events they host: "It's understandable that the short-term goals will be economic, but if you do want to unlock more opportunities, legacy is a way to really strategically position yourself beyond the numbers into the other things that the country can offer. Sometimes it may not translate to dollars immediately, but it will open up more doors and eventually bring more opportunities. Thinking about legacy will help you with that forward thinking and that forward planning." 🟡

Further reading

Some further reading from the **Place Brand Portfolio**....

Recommended case studies from finalists in the City Nation Place Awards with inspirational ideas for hosting events with real impact.

These are only available to subscribers – an annual, individual subscription costs £45, whilst an enterprise subscription giving everyone in your organisation access to over 400 case studies of place brand and marketing excellence costs £245 per year. Use the QR code for more information.



Major events...

Dusseldorf, Germany: Hosting UEFA Euro 2024

The Hague, The Netherlands: building civic pride and engagement whilst hosting the NATO Summit

New Zealand: Leveraging the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023

Stockholm, Sweden: Creating a city of supporters when hosting the Taylor Swift Eras tour

Tampere, Finland: Home of Hockey

Ventura, USA: Hosting the X Games

Business events...

Leiden, The Netherlands: Hosting the EuroScience Open Forum and creating a year to remember as the European City of Science

Republic of Moldova: Hosting the 46th World Congress of Vine and Wine

Created events....

Brixton, UK: Twinning with Harlem, New York on the Brixton x Harlem Festival

Cardiff, UK: Creating the City of Arcades week

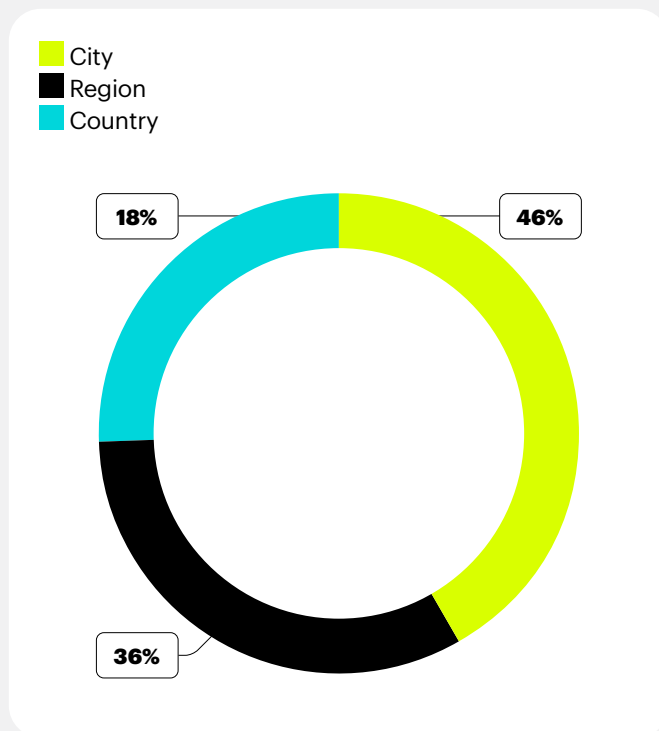
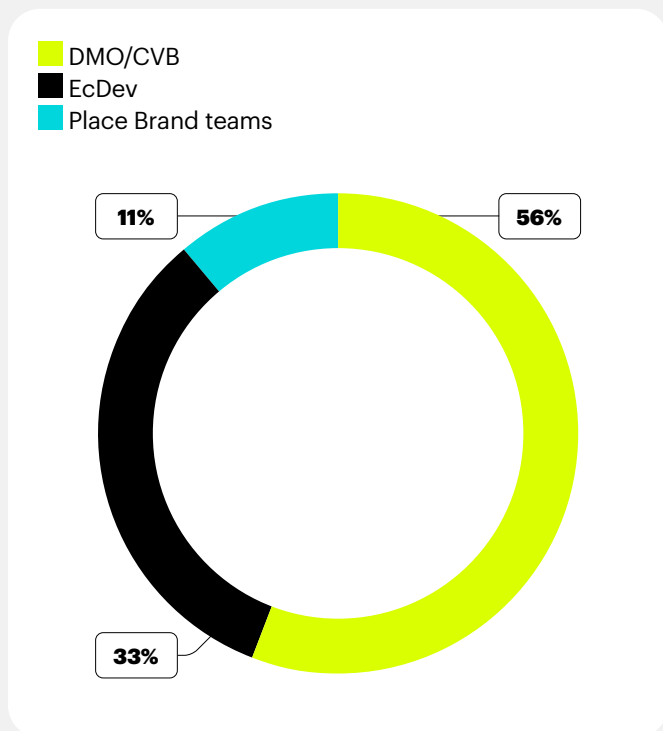
Stockton, USA: Stockton Flavor Fest

Switzerland: Swiss Tech Experience Week

Vilnius, Lithuania: creating the Pink Soup Fest to celebrate Lithuanian culture and gastronomy, build civic pride, and grow tourism

Breakdown of survey respondents

The survey informing this report was carried out through September 2025, and attracted 61 responses.



Percentage of visitor revenue derived from hosting events

Legend:

- Business / Academic events
- Sporting / music / other consumer events

