

THREE WAYS CONVENTION BUREAUX CAN VALUE-ADD TO MEETING EXPERIENCES

More than two-thirds of the associations surveyed in 2015 by the UIA were not aware or did not use services provided by convention and visitor bureaux (CVBs). Clearly, CVBs need to increase their efforts in engaging associations. More importantly, they need to increase understanding of what CVBs can do, especially how associations can tap on CVBs as a valuable resource when planning events. Jeannie Lim writes



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CVBs can generally support association meeting planners in many ways. But there are three main areas in which CVBs can further value-add to the business experience and outcomes that both event owners and visitors can find truly beneficial.

1. BOOSTING ON-GROUND ASSOCIATION NETWORKS THROUGH CVBS

For international associations looking for new event destinations, CVBs can help identify local association members to serve as on-ground contacts and partners to support their events.

For example, the Conference Ambassador Programme by the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB) comprises notable professionals and key opinion leaders. Drawn from fields such as healthcare, education and engineering, these ambassadors contribute insights and expertise, and offer a wealth of information on Singapore as a destination for business events. They also help generate opportunities for international associations to learn from and network with other industry leaders. One such ambassador is Professor Lee Yuan Kun, elected president of the International Union of Microbiological

Sciences (IUMS) who worked with SECB to secure the bid to host the IUMS 2017 congress in Singapore.

SECB also continually engages international associations through tradeshows, roadshows, familiarization trips for association partners and in-market MICE specialists in our regional offices. In Singapore, the Bureau regularly meets both local associations and international organisations with a regional presence in Singapore to discuss hosting of meetings and events in Singapore.

In addition, with Singapore being part of the newly formed Global Association Hubs Partnership (GAHP) along with Dubai Association Centre, Destination DC, and visit.brussels, international associations can leverage our strength as a regional node to support their growth in Asia. The GAHP aims to drive the growth of international associations by helping them expand their reach and presence globally, on top of supporting them in building their capabilities.

2. WORKING WITH CVBS TO GROW ASSOCIATION EVENTS

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their events. SECB has an overview of the business events landscape in Singapore, and where relevant, can assist to facilitate synergies and collaboration between relevant business events. One example is how SECB has sought to attract and cluster related business events around flagship shows to complement Singapore's key economic industries. This ensures targeted focus on the right audience, and quality content that best caters to the needs of our business travellers. This approach has worked well as it allows time-strapped delegates to optimise their business trips and maximise opportunities across the different events.

International associations could also take advantage of assistance schemes from CVBs to help defray costs and streamline processes when organising their events. For those looking to host business events in Singapore, SECB provides incentives to support association planners. Funding support is available through the Business Events in Singapore (BEIS) scheme, which helps organisers to enhance their marketing and attendance building initiatives and create greater impact on their events and visitors' experience. The Singapore MICE Advantage Programme (SMAP), conceptualised in partnership with

Singapore Airlines and Changi Airport Group, further provides greater value such as savings on air tickets and enhanced event planning and delegate experiences, among other benefits.

To provide event organisers with a more seamless business planning experience, SECB also offers customized support that may include facilitation in securing venues, introductions with leading government agencies, local associations and business partners, and marketing and publicity support.

3. BUILDING A LEGACY WITH CVBS

Last but not least, international associations can work with CVBs to build legacies as part of event-hosting.

As a member of the BestCities Global Alliance, Singapore is able to tap into a continuing conversation about global best practices in association meetings and adapt to meet the evolving needs of international meeting planners.

Conversely, meeting planners can leverage the knowledge and contacts of our partner networks, such as BestCities, to create and sustain legacies for their events. The World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT) is one such example. It held its international physical therapy congress in Singapore for the first time in 2015, providing the momentum for the Singapore Physiotherapy Association to further promote the profession in Singapore through these new initiatives – the formalisation a Bachelor of Science with Honours programme in physiotherapy, and the institution of the Specialist Physiotherapy Accreditation Board for local physiotherapists.

By partnering with CVBs at each stage of event planning – from selecting a destination to hosting the event – international associations can better enhance their events and delegates' experiences, and take their events to greater heights. **HO**

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