



WORKING WITH CONVENTION BUREAUX

Advice for international association meeting planners and decision makers

Partner of:



About ICCA

Shaping the future and value of international association meetings

ICCA - the International Congress and Convention Association - is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry.

ICCA is the global association leader for the international meetings industry. Since its establishment in 1963, ICCA specialises in the **international association meetings** sector, offering unrivalled data, education, communication channels, and business development and networking opportunities.

ICCA's founders were a small, visionary group of travel agency friends based on 4 continents who saw the potential of internationally rotating medical association meetings. They set up systems to share information about these meetings and to introduce their clients to trustworthy contacts in countries where they might not know any local contacts. These principles of **sharing knowledge** and **building trust** between suppliers and international associations continue to be the foundation stones of ICCA today.

ICCA represents the world's top destinations and most experienced suppliers specialised in handling, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises of **over 1,100 member companies and organisations in almost 100 countries and territories worldwide.**

As of 2020 ICCA encompasses all major stakeholders in the world of association meetings, by opening its doors to associations with the launch of the "ICCA Association Community", offering education, connections, tools and resources to associations to organise more effective meetings.

This guide is part of a series of publications specifically designed for the international association community to assist them running more efficient and effective meetings.

Join the ICCA Association Community:

To serve the associations in a more efficient way, ICCA has launched the ICCA Association Community - a unique platform providing Association Executives with access to ICCA services and benefits:

-ICCA Meetings Intelligence tools, including Association Meetings Database, Destination Comparison tool and Big Data Search.

-Education and networking opportunities at the ICCA events

-ICCA's publications and reports

To be able join the ICCA Association Community, your meeting must rotate between at least 3 countries, must occur on a regular basis and must attract a minimum of 50 participants.

If you would like to join the ICCA Association Community please visit the ICCA website www.associations.iccaworld.org.

For more information on the ICCA Association Community and ICCA products available for Association Executives please contact: Ksenija Polla, CMP, Director Association Relations at ksenija.p@iccaworld.org.

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Working with Convention Bureaux

1.1 Introduction

The Convention Bureaux in ICCA membership represent the most internationally focused and experienced destinations worldwide. From providing strategic advice to the organisers of citywide conventions to finding that special historic venue for an exclusive Board of Directors dinner, you'll find their expertise is hard to beat. For their complete contact details please visit the ICCA website: www.iccaworld.com.

1.2 What is a Convention Bureau

A Convention Bureau is a destination's marketing body, and its main focus or purpose is to increase the number of events, conferences and meetings held in the destination – whether a city, a region or a country.

The Convention Bureau is the natural starting point for anyone who wants to organise a meeting or a congress in a specific destination. It is a 'one-stop-shop' for independent information and assistance and will give a planner unbiased and neutral advice on all aspects of hosting and organising conventions and business events within a particular geographical area.

A Convention Bureau offers expert services to corporate, association and independent meeting planners in order to support them in the site selection process as well as in planning and producing successful meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions and events.

As an unbiased and impartial resource, a Convention Bureau acts as the destination's recognised official point of contact for all conference organisers and meeting planners, from general enquiries through to confirmed events. As a general rule, Convention Bureaux do not organise events even though some bureaux offer commercial services. Individual bureau websites will clearly show the range of services that are available.

Convention Bureaux maintain a close relationship with local institutions, scientists, academic leaders, senior medical practitioners, etc. as in some occasions local support is needed to put forward proposals or invitations. In this instance the Convention Bureau can assist international meeting planners to get in touch with local institutions.

A wide range of information about their destination is provided by the bureau, including meeting, accommodation and transportation facilities; lists of local suppliers such as PCOs, DMCs, hotels and third party service suppliers such as AV, interpretation services, sightseeing companies; unique venues and tourist resources; stand contractors. They can help with administrative information such as visa application, custom rules and regulations and useful contact addresses and links for other industry related associations.

1.3 How are Convention Bureaux organised?

The Convention Bureau may be an integrated part of an 'umbrella' organisation such as

- national or regional tourist boards
- national, regional, or local governments
- city marketing and promotion bodies
- city councils
- chambers of commerce

It can be a combination of the above, but it may also be a separate, private entity.

The bureau is usually funded, at least partially, by its members - the destination's travel and meetings industry. If the bureau has no members, it might be funded by the local or national government. In most cases, a combination of the two financial sources will be the case. In the USA, Convention Bureaux are typically part-funded by city bed taxes.

The services of the Convention Bureau are usually free of charge to meeting planners.

1.4 What services do Convention Bureaux provide?

Primary role

The Convention Bureau's primary responsibility is to market and sell the destination it represents, and secure future meetings, congresses, exhibitions and other related business events to the destination.

Promotional materials

Convention Bureaux produce promotional material for the use of meeting planners and organisers. This wide choice may include meeting & incentive planners guides, promotional DVDs, films, USB sticks, brochures, posters, maps, copyright-free pictures, e-letters, and other downloadable materials i.e. media libraries.

Educational trips and site inspections

Convention Bureaux organise educational trips and site inspections to introduce their destination to planners. These trips are coordinated by the bureau and the potential buyers are invited to familiarise themselves with the destination and its suppliers.

Websites

The websites of Convention Bureaux bring the planners and the travel industry of the destination together online, and provide all the necessary information and guidance the planners and organisers might need. Useful materials such as meeting and incentive planner guides, videos, photos, films, press kits, releases, and E-news can be downloaded from the websites.

The online event calendar is also an important service of Convention Bureau websites as it contains the list and the full details of upcoming conferences and events with direct links to the events' websites.

Supplier information and quotations

Convention Bureaux act as an intermediary between planners and the meetings industry of the destination. They provide information about suppliers for meetings and incentives and introduce the planners to local suppliers. They also assist in obtaining quotes from suppliers and comprehensive proposals from local PCOs (professional congress organisers) and DMCs (destination management companies).

Most of the Convention Bureaux offer online RFPs (request for proposals) on their websites and online venue finding solutions to help planners and organisers with the suppliers and proposals for their event.

Social programmes, pre and post tours and incentive packages

Convention Bureaux offer meeting planners advice on social events and spouse programmes by providing information and recommendations on unique venues, tourist attractions, sightseeing programmes as well as creative incentive packages. These includes useful tips on the city and pre and post tour alternatives.

Convention Bureaux can also supply planners/organisers with a wide choice of programmes gathered from their experienced local PCOs and DMCs.

Assistance with congress candidature – official bids

As the coordination office, Convention Bureaux play a very important role in being the link between planners/organisers and the destination, especially in getting support of local authorities for the events/conventions.

From the very beginning of the candidature process to the hosting of the event, Convention Bureaux deal with local/regional/national authorities in order to provide the city's official, financial and administrative support which vary among destinations and in different forms such as support letters, permitting the use of city halls and unique venues at no or minimum cost, assisting in the promotion of an event with banners and boards around the city, etc. Some cities even sponsor receptions or provide some form of financial compensation.

Convention Bureaux support the congress candidature process by compiling and submitting the official bid for the city, providing promotional material, assisting with presentations, coordinating the support of local authorities, and coordinating site inspections.

Tentative bookings

Bureaux can make tentative reservations of conference venues and hotel rooms to ensure necessary availability.

Convention publicity and delegate boosting

After a bid is won, Convention Bureaux give assistance with convention publicity by offering organisers the free use of posters, films, photos, videos, and other promotional material, creating e-mail campaigns for the promotion of the destination, supplying boards and banners around the city during the congress, listing the congress on their Online Event Calendar and giving direct links to the congress website.

Destination display and promotion

Convention Bureaux may assist in organising promotional activities during earlier congresses, in order to promote their destination and encourage higher levels of attendance, when the congress takes place in their destination.

Information kits and welcome packs for conference attendees

Convention Bureaux can provide meeting organisers with delegate information kits which include material such as city guides, maps, brochures etc, to be distributed to the congress participants.

City cards/passes

Convention Bureaux may offer free or discounted city cards to congress participants, which cover the transportation network of the city as well as services such as reduced or free entrance to museums, discounts for restaurants and shops, etc.

Other services

Depending on the size and the policies of the bureau, some might also provide the following services:

- Registration assistance
- Opening ceremony sponsorship of congresses in the city
- Hospitality/information desk during the congress
- Assistance in finding financial support where appropriate
- Shuttle services
- Housing
- Reservations of guided city tours
- Pre-financing and/or guarantee funds to organisers

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