Place leadership and the business events sector

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Foreword

There are moments when the rules change. This is one of them. Around the world, cities, regions and nations are rethinking how they compete for investment, talent, innovation and long-term prosperity. Those that recognize the opportunity before them and act with ambition will be the places that thrive.Increasingly, business events are part of that story, moving from the margins to the mainstream of place strategy.

Yet while many of us have long understood the value of business events, we haven't always had a shared conceptual language to explain that value clearly beyond our own industry. This white paper helps to change that.

Professor Greg Clark and Borane Gille present a compelling case for why business events deserve a more strategic role in shaping places.

They combine global insight from outside the business events sector with practical examples to show how our sector can attract talent, accelerate innovation, strengthen partnerships and open conversations that were long overdue.

My hope is that this paper gives destinations not only the evidence to think differently, but the confidence to act, and the tools to do so effectively. The opportunity is here. Now is the time to seize it.

Natasha Richards,
Director of Impact & Industry Relations,
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Executive summary

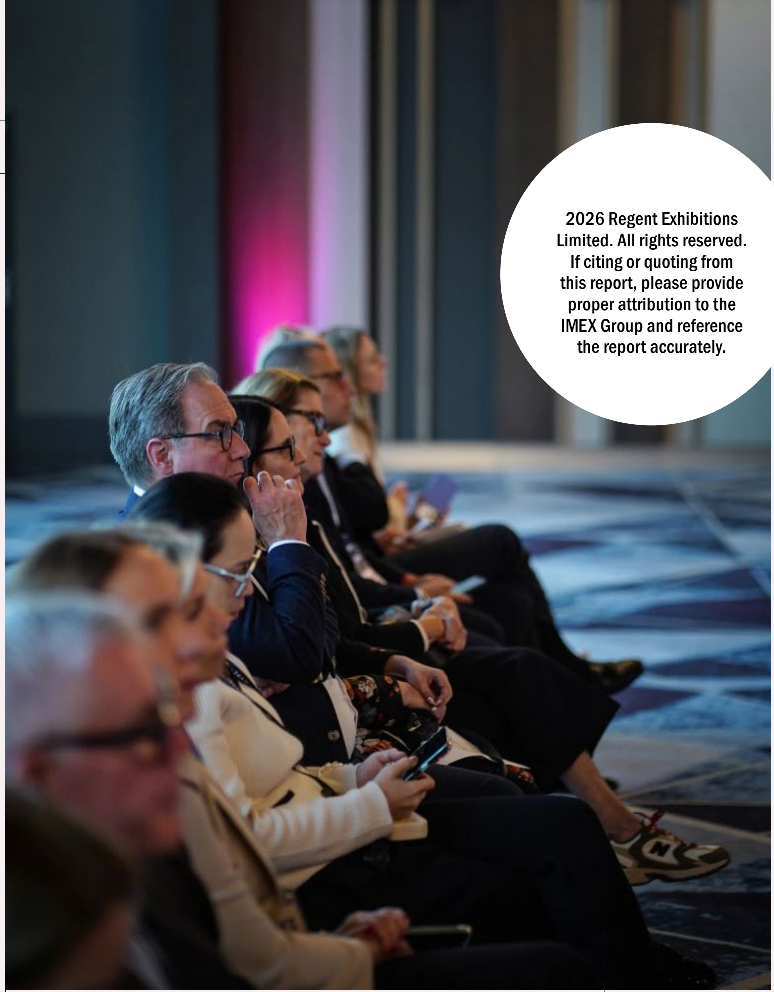
A new cycle is opening for cities, regions and nations. The pandemic accelerated structural shifts that had been gathering for years: hybrid and remote work, digitised consumption, online learning, mobile capital and decoupled lifestyles. Overall, choice, mobility and competition have all increased. Talent, students, investors, visitors, residents and discretionary spending are now openly contested between places to a degree without recent precedent.

New cohorts have emerged, including digital nomads, hybrid workers, seasonal climate migrants, modular learners and globally mobile families. These groups do not fit traditional categories. Every place is now competing for every form of mobile activity, often simultaneously. The boundary between visiting, working, studying, investing and living continues to dissolve. A newly integrating 'destination economy' mediates the relationships between innovation, enterprise, experience and consumption.

The destinations that flourish in this environment will be those that move from siloed promotion to integrated **place leadership**. This is the shared civic capacity to shape and steward the future of the place across public, private, academic and community actors, and across physical, digital and hybrid interactions.

This white paper sets out how **the business events sector** can optimise its contribution in this new cycle. It rests on three propositions:

- **First, the destination economy** requires whole-of-place strategy. The lines between tourism, talent, investment, innovation and residence have blurred, and only integrated approaches will succeed.
- **Second, place leadership** is no longer optional. Solving complex civic challenges and seizing the new mobility opportunities depends on coordinated effort across sectors.
- **Third, business events** are uniquely positioned to enable place leadership. They convene the very actors whose alignment is required, accelerate sectoral roadmaps, and embed knowledge, talent and investment into local economies in ways that few other instruments can match.



Acting on these propositions requires the sector to make seven interlinked moves. It must:

1. **reframe its identity and promote a shared strategic voice**
2. **embed itself formally in diverse place leadership structures**
3. **systematically align event portfolios with place economic and innovation priorities**
4. **make impact, legacy and measurement a single discipline**
5. **establish an intelligence-sharing compact with governments at every level**
6. **champion inclusivity and sustainability as civic and competitive obligations**
7. **build capability while evolving and reforming funding and governance models**

These seven moves are summarised at the end of Section 1 and set out in full in Section 6.

The case for action is therefore not abstract. The sector is being offered, by the structural conditions of the new cycle, a clear route into civic relevance, commercial resilience, and a sustained and sustaining contribution to the places it serves. The remainder of this paper sets out, in detail, what that route looks like, and how it must be taken.

The argument is grounded in 27 destination case studies drawn from across the world, illustrating how this work is being approached in different political, economic and civic contexts:

1. **Amsterdam** (whole-of-place foundation under amsterdam&partners)
2. **Auckland** (convention bureau within an integrated growth agency)
3. **Barcelona** (legacy framework to align with social and environmental agendas)
4. **Berlin (visitBerlin)** (sustainability and value-chain co-creation through BESTIVAL)
5. **Berlin (Estrel)** (private venue acting as civic anchor)
6. **Cape Town** (regional alignment and economic transformation)
7. **Canada** (legacy and impact study)
8. **Calgary** (post-2015 economic diversification through events)
9. **Catalunya** (regional cluster strategy and Barcelona's legacy work)
10. **Copenhagen** (alignment with Denmark's Life Science Strategy)
11. **Croatia** (national framework for sectoral diversification)
12. **Denmark** (cluster-destination partnerships linking congresses to industrial priorities)
13. **Dubai** (full administrative consolidation under DET (Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism)
14. **Gothenburg** (sustainability leadership and impact measurement)
15. **Iceland** (small-nation positioning around science and climate)
16. **India** (national meetings and events strategy and emerging hub-building)
17. **Ireland** (national legacy programme tied to economic priorities)
18. **Israel** (national-municipal coalition repositioning meetings and events within innovation strategy)
19. **Luxembourg** (country positioning around finance and EU institutions)
20. **Madrid** (cross-sector legacy programmes)
21. **New York (Javits Center)** (venue-led civic anchoring)
22. **New Zealand** (national legacy programme integrated with industry policy)
23. **Singapore** (whole-of-government alignment around strategic clusters)
24. **Sydney** (space industry coalition tied to a strategic bid)
25. **São Paulo** (cross-sector framework with documented follow-ups)
26. **Taiwan** (national programme aligned with industrial strategy)
27. **Tel Aviv** (inter-bureau alliance shifting national tourism policy and budget)

Detailed profiles of each are provided in the Appendix, setting out their destination economy purpose, place leadership model and degree of multi-stakeholder alignment.

The authors would like to thank all CVBs (convention bureaux), tourism offices and DMOs (destination management organisations) who contributed to make this white paper a co-created piece.

Professor Greg Clark speaking at Place Leaders Forum, IMEX Frankfurt

1. Introduction and summary

This paper focuses especially on **what business event leaders must do** to engage fully in place leadership for the destination economy and provides a complete overview of the wider trends and concepts that shape this new agenda. It is aimed at DMOs, CVBs, industry associations and venues, and the governments and economic development agencies that fund and govern them.

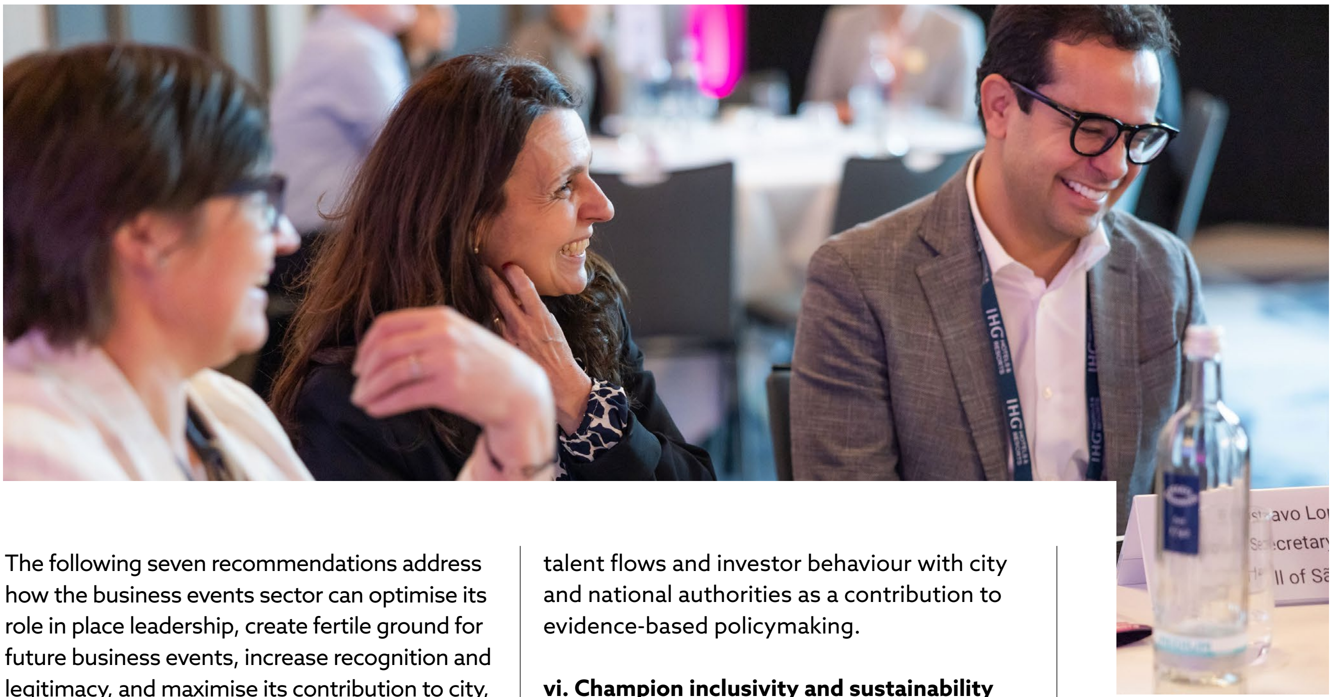
It translates the strategic case above into a practical programme: seven recommendations the sector can begin acting on, regardless of size, mandate or starting point.

The opening of this new cycle creates a window of opportunity for the business events sector that may not return on the same terms. Three reinforcing dynamics make the case:

The civic agenda has evolved. Cities, regions and nations are now actively seeking integrated approaches to innovation, talent, climate transition and economic transformation. Business events are one of the few mechanisms that combine convening power, knowledge transfer, sectoral focus, international visibility and local mobilisation in a single act. The sector is therefore being looked at, often for the first time, as a potential partner in solving problems it was not previously asked to address.

The competitive logic has changed. Cities, regions and nations are now competing for more than just residents, workers and visitors. Bidding for events is no longer simply a contest between venues and accommodation packages. It is a contest between place propositions. Delegates, exhibitors and decision-makers increasingly read events as signals of a destination's sectoral seriousness, governance quality and welcome. Destinations that align events with published economic strategies, that involve their universities, clusters, civic leaders, and that demonstrate measurable legacy now win the bids that matter most. The sector's commercial fortunes are therefore directly tied to the depth of its civic embedding.

The institutional architecture is maturing. Across the 27 case studies, three pathways into place leadership are visible: horizontal alliances between CVBs and partner agencies, vertical integration with public economic development bodies, and full administrative consolidation. None is universally right; each suits a different civic and political context. What matters is that the choice can now be made deliberately, drawing on a richer evidence base than ever before. CVBs, venues, industry associations and event owners no longer need to invent their place leadership role from first principles; they can adopt and adapt models already proven elsewhere. The question is no longer whether this integration is possible. It is whether the sector will move fast enough to claim it.



Photography © Alex Puchalsk | Place Leaders Forum, IMEX Frankfurt 2026

The following seven recommendations address how the business events sector can optimise its role in place leadership, create fertile ground for future business events, increase recognition and legitimacy, and maximise its contribution to city, regional and national economies and community wellbeing. They are presented here in summary and set out in full in Section 6.

i. Reframe the sector's identity and promote a shared strategic voice. Adopt civic-and-economic language as the primary positioning across all industry bodies, DMOs, CVBs and venues; build a collectively resourced advocacy repository and policy publication programme.

ii. Embed business events formally in place leadership structures. Secure permanent seats on economic development, innovation, climate and skills boards; work with local and regional government to create the institutional pathways for formal involvement.

iii. Align event portfolios with place economic and innovation priorities. Map bidding decisions, acquisition priorities and programming choices against published place strategies; treat events as milestones in sectoral roadmaps rather than standalone commercial wins.

iv. Make impact, legacy and measurement a single discipline. Build legacy co-design into the bid stage through shared frameworks; adopt a standard multi-dimensional measurement framework covering economic, knowledge, talent, environmental and community dimensions; report publicly.

v. Establish an intelligence-sharing compact with governments at every level. Share the sector's unique insight on global trends, talent flows and investor behaviour with city and national authorities as a contribution to evidence-based policymaking.

vi. Champion inclusivity and sustainability as civic and competitive obligations. Embed environmental, social and governance commitments across the full event value chain; adopt industry codes, shared standards and peer benchmarking; report publicly and consistently.

vii. Build capability while evolving and reforming funding and governance. Develop a tiered capability pathway from strategic literacy to full civic integration; pursue co-funding from economic development agencies; advocate for governance models that recognise long-term civic and economic value.

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2. Global megatrends and the new dynamics of places

Cities across the world are being reshaped by eight megatrends: demographic transition, economic restructuring, technological progress, geopolitical shifts, climate risks, housing pressures, health imperatives and cultural/behavioural change.

All are mediated by a dramatic rise in **mobile populations**. Now more than ever, workers, students, innovators, digital nomads, migrants, business delegates, seasonal movers and visitors choose where to spend their time based on values, opportunity, affordability and quality of life.

These trends create both urgency and opportunity. They make clear that **places must compete as destinations**, not only for visitors, but for population, jobs, talent, capital, innovation and investment. They also highlight the need for **integrated governance**, long-term strategic thinking and cross-sector collaboration capable of addressing dynamic population mixes, climate transition, digital transformation, affordability and social cohesion.

This context forms the backdrop for the rise of the **destination economy** and the new strategic importance of business events.

2.1 The destination economy

Over the past decade, traditional distinctions between tourism, business travel, inward investment, talent attraction, student recruitment and innovation ecosystems have begun to blur. People now move in and out of places in multiple roles: a researcher becomes an entrepreneur, a customer becomes an investor, a congress delegate becomes a resident, a tourist becomes a student.

Intensified competition across all forms of mobile activity

The pandemic accelerated structural shifts that were already underway. Hybrid and remote work, virtual conferences, e-commerce, streaming, online learning and digitally mediated entertainment have made many forms of consumption, production and exchange location independent. Where people live, work, study, spend and convene is increasingly an active choice rather than a default. Every category that destinations previously took for granted,

> Where people live, work, study, spend and convene is increasingly an active choice rather than a default.

including conventional tourism, business travel, student recruitment, corporate location, retail spending and even public sector employment, is now openly contested between cities, regions and nations. Footloose populations and discretionary spending no longer flow along established channels. They respond to perceived quality of place, affordability, connectivity, lifestyle, regulation and reputation. Competition has both broadened and deepened.

The emergence of new contested categories

At the same time, new categories of mobile populations have emerged that did not exist at scale a decade ago. Digital nomads circulate between cities for weeks or months at a time, carrying spending power and skills but bypassing traditional residence and tax frameworks. Remote and hybrid workers split their lives across multiple locations, with seasonal migrations between primary residences, second homes and work-friendly destinations becoming a defining feature of city demographics. Long-stay visitors, sabbatical workers, returnees, climate migrants, mid-career relocators, students on shorter modular programmes and globally mobile families form an increasingly significant share of the population on any given day. Specialist visa regimes, co-living developments, remote-work hubs and bleisure segments have emerged in response. None of these flows fit cleanly into the pre-pandemic categories of resident, visitor or worker, and policy frameworks are catching up unevenly.

Increasingly intertwined flows

These cohorts are now interconnected. A city that attracts a major scientific congress also attracts the spouses, families and remote-working colleagues of delegates, some of whom return as digital nomads, students or eventually residents. A destination known for sustainable tourism becomes attractive to climate-conscious talent and to firms relocating to align with employee values. A creative industries festival builds reputational capital that a finance-sector convention can later draw on. Each form of mobility shapes the conditions for the others, and the boundary between visiting, working, studying, investing and living continues to dissolve. Destinations cannot manage these flows in silos; the experience of one cohort directly affects the willingness of others to choose the place.

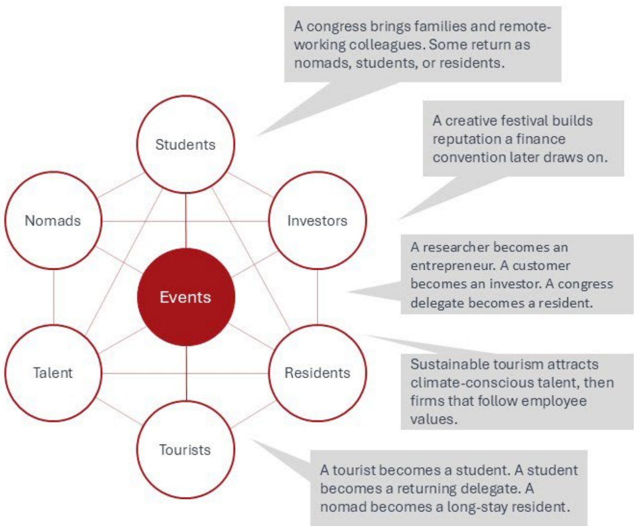
A new imperative for place leadership

Together, these dynamics create a new imperative for integrated place leadership. The opportunities are larger than at any point in recent history: more talent, more capital, more visitors, more events and more investment are available to be captured. So are the risks: fragmented governance, mismatched infrastructure, affordability pressures, congestion and cultural displacement can erode reputation and competitiveness rapidly. Capturing opportunity and managing flows are now two sides of the same coin. Destinations that recognise this and equip themselves to coordinate across visitor, talent, innovation, investment and resident agendas will convert global mobility into durable

The Competition Has Changed: The 'Destination Economy' has arrived.

Cities once received residents, visitors, and workers. Now they compete for the attention of many more.

- Tourism, business travel, students, corporate location, retail, even public sector employment, are openly contested between cities, regions, and nations.
- Where people live, work, study, and convene is now an active choice.
- Digital nomads, hybrid workers, climate migrants, modular learners, mid-career relocators, returnees and globally mobile families. **Each carries spending power, skills, networks, and a political voice.**
- Hybrid work, virtual meetings, digital commerce, and online learning have made consumption, production, and exchange **location-independent**.
- **The people a city plans for no longer match the people it competes for.**



These flows cannot be managed in silos: one cohort's experience shapes whether others choose the place.

local value. Those that continue to treat each flow as a separate policy domain will find that competitors, not the absence of demand, define the limits of their growth.

Destinations must therefore shift from siloed strategies to **whole-of-place approaches** that orchestrate experience, identity, connectivity, culture, innovation and liveability.

The destination economy sits at the intersection of two powerful forces:

1. The innovation economy is driven by discovery, research, talent, technology, risk capital and knowledge-intensive industries. It is highly place-dependent: ideas cluster, networks matter, proximity accelerates collaboration, and the quality of place determines whether global talent chooses to stay.

2. The experience economy is driven by interaction, authenticity, amenity, culture, design, events, hospitality, nightlife, public realm, creativity, surprise and narrative. It shapes how people feel about a place and whether they form emotional attachment with it.

When these two forces converge, places become **destinations for ideas, people, capital and experiences, simultaneously**. This convergence creates a dynamic foundation for creativity, competitiveness and resilience.

Business events are where innovation and experience converge: global networks meet local ecosystems, industries share knowledge, and new partnerships and investments are seeded in concentrated, high-value episodes that few other civic instruments can replicate.

Vienna has embedded data analytics and resident welfare metrics directly into its destination governance, treating business events as instruments of sustainable urban development rather than stand-alone hospitality products. Its 'Good Growth' strategy caps visitor density in sensitive areas while actively targeting congresses aligned with the city's knowledge economy priorities, making it one of the clearest operational examples of the destination economy concept in practice.

Barcelona's 22@ innovation district illustrates how a city can structurally align business event bidding with its industrial cluster strategy. Events hosted in the district are selected for relevance to life sciences, technology and creative sectors, co-ordinated across the convention bureau, city government and cluster organisations. Business events here function as deliberate accelerators of the destination's long-term innovation agenda.

In this model, business events occupy a distinctive position. Unlike innovation districts or cultural institutions, which are fixed assets that visitors must seek out, business events are mobile infrastructure that must be won. A destination must be selected. Winning is therefore a signal: of sectoral seriousness, of governance quality, of the destination's capacity to host the world.

2.2. Place leadership

In this context, **integrated place leadership** has become central to long-term competitiveness, cohesion and resilience. It requires governments, businesses, universities, cultural institutions, community organisations, utilities, investors and destination promoters to align around a shared vision for the future of the place. Instead of operating in siloed domains, these actors collaborate to coordinate investment, pool expertise and co-design the experiences,

infrastructure and economic systems that shape daily life, and to compete for contested opportunities. The institutional frameworks of cities, regions and nations, and their ability to address complex multi-dimensional challenges in place and over time is now a key competitive advantage or disadvantage of territories.

Place leadership is a **shared civic function** involving public, private, academic, cultural and community actors. It reduces fragmentation, accelerates problem-solving, and enables places, whether nations like Singapore, regions like Flanders, or fast-urbanising African cities like Nairobi, to respond to global pressures and imperatives with both unity of purpose and contextual nuance. Effective place leadership aligns priorities across sectors, bridges territorial and institutional levels, and integrates long-term strategy with short-term action. Conversely, places that strengthen leadership, whether Medellín's innovation partnerships, Denmark's regional coalitions or Singapore's whole-of-government coordination, demonstrate accelerated economic repositioning, improved resilience and higher levels of trust. Effective place leadership enables optimal use of resources and more effective navigation of a dynamic context.

Place leadership refers to the **collective leadership** exercised by public institutions, private and civic organisations, universities, cultural anchors, utilities and communities to shape the long-term direction of a place. It is distinct from municipal management.

Gothenburg's destination management organisation, Göteborg and Co, has been restructured to create a dedicated unit linking business events to the city's urban development and societal sustainability agenda. Events are evaluated for their contribution to Gothenburg's Goal 2035 sustainability framework and to specific regeneration priorities in the harbour and innovation districts, an alignment that has helped attract congresses in sustainable urban development, mobility and the circular economy.

A well-led place attracts talent, fosters interaction, signals stability and inspires progress.

Why place leadership matters

Modern economic activity depends heavily on qualities that cannot be standardised: creativity, trust, judgment, collaboration and cultural fit. These depend on the environment in which they take place. A well-led place attracts talent, fosters interaction, signals stability and inspires progress.

The costs of weak or fragmented leadership

Without effective place leadership, nations, regions, districts and cities drift into fragmentation: policies conflict with one another, investments misalign, public works disrupt, brands weaken, safety and cleanliness decline, infrastructure falls out of sync, visitor experience deteriorates, so trust and civic capital erode. Small coordination failures can cascade into significant economic loss. Over time, places lose competitiveness and resilience. A congress series won by one city is rarely recaptured by the rival that failed to follow through on its legacy commitments. This is because the institutional relationships built around it, the research partnerships, spin-out networks, investor contacts, all migrate with the event. Over time, weak place leadership compounds: places lose competitiveness in exactly the arenas, talent, capital, high-value convening, where the new mobility offers the greatest prizes.

Importantly, the case for business events engagement is not limited to globally leading or highly innovative destinations. In fact, cities and regions experiencing fragmented leadership, stalled investment, or weak coordination may offer some of the most compelling opportunities and successful examples.

Where leadership is strong, business events can reinforce existing momentum. Where leadership is weak or fragmented, events can act as catalysts; setting fresh challenges, importing expertise, convening difficult conversations and creating neutral platforms for alignment. This mirrors a familiar 'barbell' logic in event bidding: destinations succeed either by demonstrating exceptional strength in a field, or by clearly articulating a strategic need that the event itself can help address.

For many mid-sized cities, post-industrial regions, or fast-growing urban areas, business events can become tools for capacity-building, accelerating learning, exposing gaps and mobilising coalitions around shared challenges.

What good place leadership looks like

Strong place leadership features specific capabilities:

- ✓ Shared vision and narrative
- ✓ Cross-sector governance
- ✓ Distributed leadership, with clear role allocation and responsibilities
- ✓ Civic participation platforms
- ✓ Long-term investment mindset
- ✓ Alignment of local priorities with global opportunities
- ✓ Use of evidence and intelligence for decision-making
- ✓ Integration across place-shaping domains (e.g. transport, culture, health, economic development, planning, environment and innovation)
- ✓ Multi-year, stable funding

It requires both **horizontal collaboration** (across sectors) and **vertical collaboration** (between local, regional and national levels).

Business events: A historic blind spot in place leadership?

For much of the past three decades, place leadership frameworks have been shaped primarily by local and regional leaders, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, planning authorities, transport bodies, universities and major employers. These actors have understandably focused on economic and spatial strategies, land use, infrastructure, industrial strategy, skills, place promotion and investment attraction.

In most destinations, the business events sector has played only a peripheral role in these conversations, typically positioned as an operational delivery function rather than a strategic contributor. This has not been the result of deliberate exclusion. Rather, it reflects how business events have historically been framed: as a tourism or hospitality sub-sector, assessed mainly through bed nights, delegate spend and venue utilisation, and driven by transaction (bidding and winning dynamics), rather than strategies. As a consequence, their convening power, knowledge-exchange role and capacity to accelerate collaboration, have often been overlooked.

This white paper is not an attempt to rewrite that history. Instead, it argues that a significant opportunity has been missed, and that changing global conditions now make it both timely and necessary to correct this blind spot. A central structural reason is that business events have historically been funded and governed through tourism and hospitality mandates, measured on bed nights and delegate spend, rather than through economic development frameworks measured on knowledge transfer, cluster acceleration and investment attraction. Reforming this positioning is not a cosmetic change; it is the precondition for the sector's full civic integration and it is addressed directly in Recommendation 7.

2.3 The role of business events in place leadership

Strong place leadership models already exist in many cities, regions and nations with and without the active involvement of the business events sector. Successful examples of integrated leadership, whether in economic transition, innovation clustering or climate governance, have typically been driven by public authorities, universities and anchor institutions.

The business events sector has always had significant convening power for key hosted events, yet it has not consistently translated that power into influence within ongoing place leadership. In many destinations, this is partly structural, but it is also cultural. The sector has tended to define itself through short-term tactics and delivery excellence rather than sustained and strategic contribution, and has often been comfortable operating adjacent to, rather than embedded within, civic leadership.

As a result, the wider value of business events has frequently been taken for granted, under-articulated and under-leveraged. Influence has not been withheld so much as it has not been claimed. While there are important exceptions, the prevailing pattern has been one of operational strength combined with strategic distance.

Part of this pattern reflects a structural positioning that has become entrenched in many destinations: CVBs have often occupied a subordinate place within DMOs, treated as the operational arm of event delivery rather than as strategic contributors to economic development. This has reinforced a tendency to define value in terms of bed nights and delegate spend rather than sectoral development and civic contribution, and has made it harder for the sector to claim the credibility and access that place leadership requires.

The opportunity now is not to claim a leadership role retrospectively, but to recognise that mature place leadership structures create a powerful platform into which the business events sector can integrate, amplify outcomes and add new forms of value. A different role is possible, and increasingly necessary, if business events are to contribute fully to the long-term competitiveness and resilience of places.

Business events as catalysts

Business events bring global knowledge and networks into the destination. They create economic, social and innovation spillovers. They encourage cross-sector dialogue, build visibility and reputation, showcase local capabilities and provide platforms for industry alignment. They stimulate investment in venues, infrastructure and public realm. They create 'moments of convergence' where strategic conversations, partnerships and decisions accelerate.

Business events as a strategic asset

Events become part of the economic architecture of the city, not an ancillary tourism product. To move from aspiration to action, destinations need **practical tools** rather than abstract ambition. Alignment between business events and place strategy does not happen organically. It requires deliberate, repeatable steps. At a minimum, effective alignment involves:

- **Understanding the city or region's stated economic and innovation priorities**
- **Mapping event portfolios against those priorities**
- **Identifying where events can reinforce clusters, skills agendas or investment narratives**
- **Designing legacy initiatives that extend beyond the event itself**

Without this discipline, even well-intentioned strategies risk remaining rhetorical rather than operational.

When aligned with place strategy, events can strengthen:

Economic impact	People	Place	Place positioning
• Priority industrial clusters • Sectoral innovation and knowledge transfer • Business growth • Investment attraction • Social enterprise	• Talent attraction • Skills and workforce development • Inclusive growth • Civic pride and identity • Community health and wellbeing	• Public realm improvements • District regeneration • Cultural and creative ecosystem • Innovation district activation • Environmental outcomes • Resilience	• International profile • University partnerships • City diplomacy and influence • Global policy and thought leadership • Innovation positioning • Regional gateway status

> Cities, regions and nations that ignore the role of business events weaken their own competitiveness.

Consequences of leaving business events out of place leadership

It is more accurate to say that it has rarely secured a sustained seat at the senior decision-making table rather than to say that it has been excluded from place leadership. In many destinations, leadership forums are shaped by statutory mandates, funding structures and historical relationships that do not naturally include business events organisations. As a result, strategic decisions are often made without the sector's insight, not through resistance, but through institutional inertia. Recognising this distinction matters. It places agency back with the business events sector and reframes the challenge as one of positioning, capability and credibility, rather than access alone.

When business events are not part of strategic decision-making:

- Event calendars fail to support priority sectors.
- Opportunities for inward investment and innovation are missed.
- Stakeholder networks weaken.
- Places lose competitive bids to better integrated destinations.
- Policymakers overlook events as tools for development.
- Funding and advocacy become harder.
- Events become purely transactional rather than transformational.

Cities, regions and nations that ignore the role of business events weaken their own competitiveness. The next section sets out a practical pathway for DMOs, CVBs and business events organisations to make this shift, regardless of the starting point.

3. What the business events sector should do

The previous section set out why business events matter to place leadership. This section focuses on how business events organisations can act on that role in practice, recognising different starting points, capacities and governance contexts.

In this context, place leadership refers to shared civic leadership across public, private, academic and community actors, not municipal management alone.

3.1 Shift from service delivery to strategic partnership

The default failure mode for business events organisations is to optimise for transaction: winning bids, filling venues, delivering programmes and reporting delegate spend. This is necessary but insufficient. Business event leaders must transition from being solely operators or marketers to becoming **co-authors of the place's economic future.** This means:

- Engaging in economic strategy
- Participating in innovation coalitions
- Aligning event bids with priority sectors
- Using events as milestones in multi-year sector roadmaps
- Acting as advocates within city governance
- Operating as civic intermediaries
- Sharing the place's story to global audiences

Making this shift often requires an organisation restructuring. Proactive agencies have been integrated with or sit in close formal relationship to economic development bodies.

Glasgow has used its hosting of COP26 and subsequent climate congresses to build a unified narrative linking cultural identity, sustainability ambition and place leadership. The bureau works closely with Glasgow Life and Creative Scotland to ensure event programming reinforces the creative sector, and its bid strategy is explicitly sequenced around Scotland's climate transition goals, establishing Glasgow as a serious international convening hub for the green economy.

Auckland Convention Bureau shifted from event bidding to strategic ecosystem builder. It convened a two-day cross-sector forum with industry, government, academics and economic development agencies. The outcome: shared tools to communicate business event value, stronger policy alignment and structured engagement, replacing ad hoc advocacy with institutionalised collaboration. A parallel practice illustrates how political engagement can be built over time: the bureau submits quarterly briefings to the mayor's office identifying upcoming business events and recommending where the mayor could attend, speak or engage. Sustained over three years, this transformed the relationship with city hall, building a shared understanding of business events as a source of access to global networks, thought leaders and investment opportunities rather than a hospitality function.

3.2 Align event portfolios with economic and innovation plans

DMOs and event leaders must map annual event calendars against city strategies, ensuring:

- Events amplify priority clusters
- Bids support long-term objectives
- Local industries benefit from global exposure
- Universities and research institutes are integrated
- Infrastructure planning considers event flows
- Event programming aligns with innovation districts and regeneration zones

This makes events tools for development, not stand-alone activities.

Most cities and regions already publish economic development, innovation, climate and skills strategies. However, these documents are often dispersed across agencies, written in specialist language, and updated on political rather than operational cycles. As a result, they are frequently under-used by destination marketing organisations and business events leaders.

Reading these strategies is not the same as influencing them. Yet without engaging seriously with existing plans, the business events sector cannot credibly argue for a strategic role. A first step into place leadership is therefore literacy: understanding how a place defines its own priorities, constraints and ambitions, and where events might contribute meaningfully.

A first step into place leadership is therefore literacy: understanding how a place defines its own priorities, constraints and ambitions, and where events might contribute meaningfully.

Copenhagen's Convention Bureau has built structured partnerships such as the Life Science Alliance to connect congress bidding directly to Denmark's national innovation priorities. Events in life science, green energy and food systems are co-bid with cluster organisations, with post-event talent flows and investment signals actively tracked, positioning the bureau as a de facto innovation marketing function for the city's priority sectors.

Wellington NZ maps the city's research strengths annually across earth sciences, policy research and sustainability, using this as its primary guide for bid selection. Close partnerships with Victoria University of Wellington and GNS Science mean that incoming congresses are aligned with local academic priorities from the bid stage rather than retrofitted afterwards, with post-congress joint publications and collaborative grants tracked as formal success indicators.

Sydney's bid for the 2025 International Astronautical Congress brought together BESydney, the NSW Government, the Australian Space Agency, local industry and academia around a shared ambition: positioning Australia in the global space ecosystem. The coalition demonstrated that winning strategically significant events requires structured partnerships, not just venue offers.

3.3 Co-design legacy and impact programmes

Legacy should no longer be an afterthought. It must be designed from the bidding phase, with stakeholder conversations starting before bid submission. Event leaders must work with universities, civic groups, cultural institutions, schools and business clusters to design:

- Research partnerships
- Student participation pathways
- Skills development programmes
- Public engagement and outreach
- Community benefit initiatives
- Innovation showcases
- Testbeds and pilots
- New uses for underused assets (campuses, labs, city centre buildings...)

Legacy becomes a structured value-creation system.

This shift in conception is already visible in some destinations.

In **Guadalajara**, the convention bureau has begun to reframe its approach around legacy rather than impact, asking not what an event generates economically in the short term, but what it leaves for the city and its communities over time. This means deliberately broadening who is reached: designing programmes that extend beyond professional delegates into local communities, civil society organisations and public institutions, making international meetings genuinely present in the life of the city rather than contained within convention facilities.

Barcelona Convention Bureau launched its Legacy Program in 2025 to embed congresses within the city's social and economic fabric. Matching each event's objectives to local community needs, it has already generated lasting impact, from colorectal cancer awareness campaigns to workplace inclusion initiatives for people with multiple sclerosis.

3.4 Build capability and reform organisations

Stepping into a more strategic role within place leadership requires new capabilities, but it does not require every business events organisation to become a fully resourced policy or analytics unit. Most destinations operate with constrained teams and mandates, and capability-building must therefore be realistic, phased and collaborative.

At a minimum, business events leaders need sufficient capability to engage credibly in strategic conversations. This includes basic policy literacy, an understanding of local economic and innovation priorities, the ability to articulate value beyond immediate economic impact, and the skills required to manage complex stakeholder relationships. These competencies allow the sector to participate effectively, even where resources are limited.

Where internal capacity is constrained, organisations can act as facilitators and aggregators rather than sole providers of expertise. This may involve partnering with universities, consultancies, innovation agencies or peer destinations to access skills in areas such as sustainability measurement, data analysis or legacy evaluation. One idea mentioned at the IMEX Place Leaders Forum was to draw graduates from business schools to build the talent pipeline, as opposed to tourism programmes. In many cases, shared tools, pooled resources or collaborative reporting models can achieve more than isolated internal investment.

At a minimum, business events leaders need sufficient capability to engage credibly in strategic conversations.

Catalunya Convention Bureau offers an instructive model for capability without large internal headcount. Operating with a small core team, the bureau distributes the work of strategic place leadership across a network of outsourced consultants, specialist advisors, city and regional CVBs, and government departments. Rather than building all expertise internally, it functions as a convener and coordinator of capability already distributed across the ecosystem, achieving strategic coherence while keeping fixed costs low. This coalition-based approach is one practical answer to the challenge of maintaining strategic ambition under resource constraints and is directly transferable to destinations of comparable size and mandate.

Capability-building should also be seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-off upgrade. Digital and hybrid event delivery, sustainability standards, impact measurement, narrative development and strategic planning are all evolving rapidly. Building the ability to learn, experiment and iterate, or adaptive capacity, is therefore as important as acquiring specific technical skills.

Critically, pathways into place leadership must remain open to a wide range of destinations. A credible roadmap is one that allows smaller or less-resourced organisations to progress incrementally, demonstrating value through partnership and insight, while larger organisations take on more formalised or data-intensive roles. The objective is not uniform capability, but a sector that is collectively better equipped to engage in shaping the future of places.

Organising for the role of business events in place development

The question of how business events organisations should be structured to maximise their contribution to place leadership is one of the most important facing the sector. Three broad organisational options are being pursued internationally. They are not mutually exclusive, and, in many destinations, they have proved to be sequential, with horizontal alliances maturing into vertical partnerships and, in some cases, into fuller institutional integration.

OPTION 1:

Horizontal collaborations and alliances between DMOs, CVBs, and the wider economic development and place leadership ecosystem. This approach preserves organisational autonomy while building structured alliances with regional economic development agencies, universities, innovation districts and industry cluster bodies. Auckland's cross-sector forum, which convenes Tātaki Auckland Unlimited with innovation agencies and research institutions, illustrates the approach, as do Sydney's space industry coalition and Copenhagen's alignment with Denmark's Life Science Strategy and its associated clusters.[1]

OPTION 2:

Vertical partnerships between DMOs, CVBs and national industrial bodies, including government ministries and national cluster organisations. This approach links local destination organisations directly into national industrial strategy. Luxembourg Convention Bureau, co-financed by the City of Luxembourg and the Ministry of the Economy, is an archetype,[2] as is MeetDenmark's structured alignment with the national Life Science Cluster and the 2021 Life Science Strategy.[3] Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau, operating within the Singapore Tourism Board but closely coordinated with the Economic Development Board, offers a further variant.

OPTION 3:

Integrate or consolidate DMOs and CVBs into wider bodies with a formal remit for economic development and place leadership. This option goes furthest, placing business events within a single institution with the breadth to shape place development. Two distinct sub types are evident in practice.

Type A: Integration into a local, regional or national place or economic development agency. Here the business events function is absorbed

How to Organise: Three Options

Often sequential rather than alternative. Each has clear advantages and clear costs.

Horizontal alliance

- Bureaux and venues build structured alliances with economic development agencies, universities, innovation districts, and industry clusters.
- Auckland, Sydney, Copenhagen, Calgary, Madrid, São Paulo, Catalunya.
- **Advantages:** rapid to form, sector-by-sector scalable, adjustable as priorities shift, no political cost of structural reform.
- **Disadvantages:** depends on personal relationships, vulnerable to leadership turnover, rarely secures permanent budget or decision-making weight.
- **Best suited** to mature, well-networked destinations where civic and economic leadership is already relatively coordinated.

Vertical partnership

- Bureaux linked directly into national industrial strategy, ministerial mandates, and national cluster bodies.
- Luxembourg City, MeetDenmark, Singapore, Ireland, New Zealand, Taiwan, Iceland, Croatia.
- **Advantages:** multi-year national funding, alignment with flagship industrial priorities, improved standing with global corporates and associations.
- **Disadvantages:** slower decision cycles, exposure to shifts in national political leadership, risk that national priorities crowd out distinctive local opportunities.
- **Best suited** to smaller nations, city-states, and economies with strong national cluster and industrial policy traditions.

Full consolidation

- Type A: standalone agency. London & Partners, Amsterdam & Partners, Oslo & Co, Rotterdam Partners, Barcelona Activa.
- Type B: integration into a government department. Dubai DET, Abu Dhabi DCT, Visit Wales.
- **Advantages:** coherent place narrative, pooled intelligence across investment, talent, and visitor economies, deepest institutional embedding.
- **Disadvantages:** continued dependence on political patronage, mandate change risk, dilution of business-events expertise within a larger growth agenda; civil-service constraints for Type B.
- **Best suited** to cities with mature civic governance and a strong public-private tradition (A), or strong-state and centralised governance cultures (B).

Auckland, Copenhagen, Sydney began horizontal then moved to vertical. London, Amsterdam, Oslo moved over a decade to Type A consolidation. Dubai moved directly to Type B. The choice is between stages of institutional maturity, not three fixed models.

1 Danish Life Science Cluster, 'About Danish Life Science Cluster', https://www.danishlifesciencecluster.dk/en/about-danish-life-science-cluster/

2 Luxembourg Convention Bureau, governance and funding arrangements, https://www.luxembourg-city.com/en/convention-bureau

3 Government of Denmark, *Life Science Strategy 2021*, Copenhagen: Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, 2021.

into a standalone agency, usually at arm's length from government, with a remit covering investment, talent, visitor economy and sector promotion. London & Partners, formed in 2011 by merging Visit London, Think London (FDI) and Study London into a single growth agency for the capital, is the clearest UK example.[4]

amsterdam&partners, a public private foundation established in 2013 through the merger of Amsterdam Marketing, Amsterdam Partners, and the Amsterdam Tourism and Congress Bureau, combines the convention bureau function with investment promotion, talent attraction and residents' engagement.[5] Oslo&Co, the expanded successor to Oslo Business Region launched in 2026, similarly pulls business development, investor attraction, talent and destination promotion into a single agency working on behalf of the city.[6] Rotterdam Partners and Barcelona Activa offer further variants.

Type B: Integration into a local, regional or national administrative body of government itself. Here the business events function is embedded directly within a government department or ministry, rather than a separately constituted agency. Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism, created in November 2021 by merging Dubai Economy with the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, brought business events under a single government department with explicit industrial, trade and investment targets.[7] Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism, Visit Wales as a function of the Welsh Government's Department for the Economy, and, at a different scale, Singapore's statutory board structure illustrate related models.

Comparative advantages, disadvantages and context

The options differ most in the trade-off between agility and institutional weight. *Horizontal alliances* (Option 1) can be formed rapidly, scaled selectively by sector, and adjusted as priorities shift, without the political cost of structural reform. Their limitations lie in sustainability and depth: they depend heavily on personal relationships, are vulnerable to leadership turnover, and rarely secure permanent budgetary or decision-making influence. They work best in mature, well-networked destinations where civic and economic leadership is already relatively coordinated.

Vertical partnerships (Option 2) bring access to multi-year national funding, alignment with flagship industrial priorities, and improved standing with global corporates and associations whose mandates are typically national in scope. The disadvantages include slower decision cycles, exposure to shifts in national political leadership, and the risk that national priorities crowd out distinctive local opportunities. Vertical models tend to suit smaller nations and city states where the

4 Greater London Authority, 'London & Partners', Research Unit Publication, London: GLA, October 2024, https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-research-unit-publications/london-partners

5 amsterdam&partners, 'About us', I amsterdam, https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/amsterdam-and-partners

6 Oslo & Co, 'About Oslo & Co' and 'Oslo Business Region becomes Oslo & Co', https://osloandco.no/

7 Government of Dubai, 'Dubai merges Economy and Tourism Departments', decree issued by HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, November 2021; Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, https://www.dubaidet.gov.ae/en/

Photography © Alex Puchalsk | Place Leaders Forum, IMEX Frankfurt 2026

If business events are to function as a strategic asset rather than a standalone activity, stronger and more deliberate cross-sector partnerships are essential.

boundary between local and national economic policy is already blurred, or economies with strong national cluster and industrial policy traditions.

Integration into a standalone agency (Option 3A) offers coherence of place narrative, pooled intelligence across investment, talent and visitor economies, and a commercial governance structure that preserves operational agility. Public-private foundation, limited liability or company limited by guarantee models allow market-level pay for specialist staff, direct engagement with private sector boards, and the ability to generate commercial income alongside public grant.

The disadvantages may include continued dependence on political patronage for core funding, exposure to mandate change when civic leadership shifts, and the risk that business events expertise is diluted within a larger growth agenda. Type A models are most effective in cities with mature civic governance, a strong public-private tradition and a diversified, outward-facing economic base.

Integration into an administrative body of government (Option 3B) offers the deepest institutional embedding: statutory authority, stable budgetary position, direct alignment with planning, licensing and regulatory instruments, and a formal seat at the highest levels of government. It signals clear political commitment and enables decisive coordination across economic domains.

The disadvantages may be significant: civil service constraints on pay, procurement and recruitment can weaken the sector's ability to retain specialist commercial talent; private sector engagement tends to be more transactional than partnership based; decision cycles can be slowed by bureaucratic process; and the business events function risks being deeply submerged within a much larger administrative body. Political risk is also concentrated: a change of government or ministerial priority can reshape the entire mandate. Type B models tend to work best in strong state or centralised governance cultures, in city states or emirates where government directly plays a developmental role, and in smaller nations where the scale of the economy does not justify separately constituted agencies.

These options often appear in sequence. Auckland, Copenhagen and Sydney began with horizontal alliances before moving towards more structured vertical engagement. London, Amsterdam and now Oslo have moved, over a decade or more, from standalone tourism and convention agencies to integrated Type A growth bodies. Dubai's 2021 merger illustrates movement in a different direction, from separate departments towards full Type B administrative consolidation. The choice is therefore less between three fixed models than between several stages and styles of institutional maturity, each appropriate to a different political, economic and civic context.

3.5 Build robust cross-sector partnerships

If business events are to function as a strategic asset rather than a standalone activity, stronger and more deliberate cross-sector partnerships are essential. Place leadership does not emerge from individual organisations acting alone; it is built through sustained relationships, shared problem-solving and repeated collaboration across institutional boundaries.

For many business events organisations, this represents a shift from episodic engagement to ongoing participation in the civic ecosystem. In practice, this may involve joining economic development forums, innovation district partnerships, chambers of commerce, or sector-specific working groups. In some destinations, it may mean participating informally at first, by attending meetings, contributing insight, or convening discussions, for example, before assuming more formal roles over time.

In **Denmark**, MeetDenmark's *Valuable Meetings* initiative embeds congress attraction within Denmark's national innovation strategy by pairing four of the country's congress destinations with a major industry cluster, for example, Destination Fyn with Odense Robotics and VisitAarhus with clean-tech cluster CLEAN. Bids are only pursued where there is demonstrable alignment with cluster, university and regional development priorities.

Effective partnerships are typically built incrementally. Early engagement might focus on aligning interests around specific events, clusters or challenges, rather than attempting to influence whole-of-place strategy from the outset. Over time, consistent contribution helps establish credibility and trust, creating the conditions for deeper collaboration and shared ownership of outcomes.

Business events organisations can also play a distinctive role as neutral conveners. By bringing together public authorities, businesses, universities, cultural institutions and community organisations around specific themes or opportunities, they can create spaces for dialogue that may not otherwise exist.

Cape Town's convention bureau operates in structured partnership with the Cape Town City Improvement Districts and the Western Cape economic development agency, treating business events as instruments of social as well as economic transformation. Events are assessed for their ability to engage township businesses and create supply chain opportunities for local enterprises, extending the value proposition of business events well beyond the convention centre into the wider urban economy.

Singapore Tourism Board clusters business events around the city state's major cultural, sports and leisure events to create compound international visibility and multiply each event's impact. Congresses in healthcare, fintech and sustainability are timed alongside events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix, creating a stack of global attention that no single gathering could generate alone, a whole-of-calendar approach that maximises return on Singapore's events infrastructure investment.

Crucially, this approach must be adaptable to different contexts and capacities. Smaller or less-resourced organisations may focus on a narrow set of partnerships aligned with priority events or sectors, while larger organisations may engage across multiple governance and policy platforms. What matters is not the number of partnerships, but their relevance, durability and contribution to shared place outcomes.

3.6 Share intelligence for policy and investment

Business events generate rich insights into:
- Global trends
- Talent flows
- Delegate profiles
- Industry evolution
- Local ecosystems and gaps
- Research frontiers
- Investor interests
- Visitor behaviours
- Technology adoption
- Place reputation

Sharing this intelligence with city authorities and economic partners improves policymaking and investment decisions. Similarly, economic agencies and other stakeholders can share strategic intelligence with the business events

sector to help them sharpen their bidding and programming.

Intelligence also provides means for awareness raising, narrative development and capacity building, helping stakeholders understand what business events can do, not just what they have done.

In **Canada,** the Canadian Tourism Data Collective demonstrates what systematic intelligence infrastructure can look like at national scale. By pooling data from multiple sources, including behavioural, mobile and external data, the collective gives participating destinations access to intelligence they could not generate individually. This shared approach standardises metrics, enables benchmarking across destinations, and builds the longitudinal evidence base needed to make a credible case to governments. It offers a model for how the sector can move from anecdotal advocacy to structured, shareable intelligence.

3.7 Advocate for policy coherence across systems

Business events can and do succeed in environments where policy alignment is imperfect. Many destinations host commercially successful events despite fragmented governance, competing priorities or inconsistent delivery across transport, safety, land use, planning and visitor management systems. However, business events achieve their greatest and most sustained value when these systems work well together. Business leaders must advocate for policy alignment that improves accessibility, sustainability, visitor experience and district management.

Advocating for policy coherence is therefore not about demanding ideal conditions or attempting to control decisions beyond the sector's remit. It is about identifying friction points that limit effectiveness and making the case, collaboratively and constructively, for incremental improvement.

Business events leaders are often well placed to highlight these issues because they experience the city at moments of peak intensity, when system failures are most visible and their impacts most immediate. Sharing this operational insight with public authorities can support better decision-making, particularly when framed around mutual objectives such as reputation, sustainability, safety and inclusive growth. Even small adjustments, from better coordination of event calendars with transport planning, to clearer protocols for public realm management, or improved digital and accessibility standards, can materially enhance outcomes.

Importantly, advocacy for coherence should be grounded in partnership rather than confrontation. The most effective interventions typically involve working alongside transport agencies, city management teams, police, planning authorities and tourism bodies to align priorities where possible. Over time, this pragmatic approach can help reduce avoidable inefficiencies and strengthen the overall performance of the destination as a place to convene, invest and belong.

3.8 Champion inclusivity and sustainability

Event leaders must embed and report on:

- Carbon reduction
- Circular economy design
- Responsible supply chains
- New environmental practices and standards
- Local procurement and job creation
- Workforce diversity
- Community and youth engagement
- Accessible venues and programming
- Inclusive programming
- Worker welfare and visitor wellbeing

These principles are now essential to destination competitiveness.

Berlin's annual BESTIVAL is co-created by a five-agency consortium spanning cultural institutions, innovation platforms and sustainability networks. All 100-plus suppliers, hotels and partners sign a shared code of conduct, establishing shared sustainability and governance standards across the entire value chain. As a result, BESTIVAL 2023 became the first business festival of its kind certified to ISO 20121 for sustainable event management, demonstrating that innovation and responsibility can be embedded at scale. By 2025, BESTIVAL achieved a 10% reduction in CO_2 emissions per participant compared to 2023.

3.9 Evidence for legitimacy and influence

The ambition to measure legacy and long-term impact is widely shared across the industry, but it remains difficult in practice. Capturing knowledge transfer, innovation spillovers or reputational change requires longitudinal data, cross-sector cooperation and analytical capacity that many destinations are still developing.

Progress has been made, and initiatives such as longitudinal impact studies in Canada demonstrate what is possible. However, these approaches should be seen as emerging best practice rather than universally achievable benchmarks. Acknowledging the challenge does not weaken the argument for impact measurement; it strengthens it by grounding expectations in operational reality.

Event leaders must develop and use frameworks that capture:

- Economic impact
- Knowledge transfer
- Innovation spillovers
- Talent attraction
- Reputation and visibility
- Community benefit
- Environmental performance
- Network formation
- Capability development

Evidence strengthens influence and secures long-term support.

4. Steps into place leadership

Taken together, the actions set out in Section 3 form a practical pathway into place leadership. For most destinations, this journey begins with the following early steps:

i. **Build foundational understanding** of the city's economy, clusters and priorities.
ii. **Map stakeholders** and initiate strategic relationships.
iii. **Attend cross-sector forums** and governance meetings.
iv. **Identify quick-win alignments** between upcoming events and economic strategies.
v. **Develop capability in legacy and impact evaluation.**
vi. **Adopt a learning mindset** and seek mentorship.
vii. **Share internal insights** with city authorities.
viii. **Pilot small, visible legacy projects** with universities or civic partners.

↘ These early actions build credibility, establish trust and demonstrate the sector's readiness.

The DMO and CVB pathway into place leadership

A scalable roadmap for destinations of different sizes, mandates and capacities

Stage	Strategic focus	What DMOs and CVBs can do in practice	What this enables
Stage 1 **Awareness and literacy**	Understanding the place	• Read city and regional economic, innovation and climate plans • Map priority sectors, clusters and institutions • Identify where existing events already align	• More informed bidding • Stronger internal coherence • Credible entry into strategic conversations
Stage 2 **Alignment and contribution**	Strategic relevance	• Align event portfolios with priority sectors • Pilot small legacy or knowledge initiatives • Share basic intelligence with policymakers	• Visibility beyond tourism • Early trust with economic and civic partners
Stage 3 **Partnership and influence**	Embedded collaboration	• Participate in cross-sector forums and boards • Co-design legacy programmes with universities or clusters • Advocate for practical policy coherence	• Trusted partner status • Influence over priorities and sequencing
Stage 4 **Civic integration**	Long-term value creation	• Regular role in place leadership structures • Data-led insight for policy and investment • Structured impact and legacy reporting	• Sustained influence • Recognition as a civic asset

Place leadership is not a status but a progression, from understanding the place, to contributing to its strategy, to helping shape its future. Place leadership is about contribution, not scale.

It is worth noting that second and third-tier cities may hold a structural advantage in making this journey. In smaller cities, there is greater visibility across agencies, more awareness of who is doing what, and a greater willingness to share risk and collaborate across institutional boundaries. Large cities often have entrenched bureaucracies and competing power centres that can slow institutional change. Smaller and mid-sized cities can be nimbler, more willing to experiment, and more open to pooling resources and risk. The pathway is therefore not only accessible to these destinations, in some respects it may be more easily traversable.

How the pathway applies to different levels of scale and maturity of DMOs

DMO context	Most realistic focus	Leadership contribution
Small/emerging destination	Stages 1–2	Strategic literacy, convening, alignment
Mid-sized/regional DMO	Stages 2–3	Partnership-building, legacy pilots
Large/capital city DMO	Stages 3–4	Governance participation, data, advocacy
National DMO	Stages 3-4	Policy advocacy, multi-destination coordination

5. Conclusion: A new civic role for the business events sector

The convergence of global megatrends, rising mobility and new patterns of competition has elevated the importance of place leadership. Cities and regions must build integrated destination economies that align innovation, experience, governance, climate transition and social inclusion.

Several structural barriers continue to limit the ability of the business events sector to step fully into a place leadership role. These include funding models that prioritise short-term visitor metrics, governance structures dominated by tourism mandates, limited analytical capacity, and short political or budgetary cycles that discourage long-term thinking.

In some contexts, particularly where DMOs and CVBs are funded through bed taxes or hospitality levies, incentives remain tightly focused on volume rather than value or strategic alignment. The mismatch this creates is significant. Bureaux that are succeeding at place leadership, convening cross-sector alliances, catalysing sector growth and embedding knowledge in local ecosystems, still depend on funding mechanisms that reward none of these activities. The result is that strategic ambition is in perpetual tension with operational survival: a bureau cannot become an intelligence hub on a marketing budget, nor sustain long-term place leadership work on annual hospitality-linked appropriations. Addressing these constraints will require experimentation, advocacy and partnership, not only within the business events sector, but across the wider place leadership ecosystem.

The disruption of the pandemic opened a window of opportunity for a different conversation. Cities, regions and nations have been rethinking their economic strategies, politicians have become more receptive to arguments about resilience, diversification and knowledge-based growth, and the sector has gained a visibility it had not previously commanded. That window will not remain open indefinitely. Cities are making decisions now about where to invest, which sectors to prioritise, and how to structure their economic development agencies. Bureaux that wait for permission to occupy a strategic role risk finding that the moment has passed.

Business events are central to this agenda.

They convene stakeholders, attract mobile populations, strengthen clusters, amplify reputation, support innovation and inject global energy into local ecosystems. But for business events to fully realise this potential, sector leaders must step into a new role: **strategic partners in place leadership.**

This means:

i. Co-creating economic vision
ii. Aligning events with priority clusters
iii. Co-designing legacy programmes
iv. Sharing intelligence
v. Advocating for policy coherence
vi. Embedding sustainability and inclusivity
vii. Building capability

The most successful places of the coming decades will be those where business event leaders are fully integrated into civic leadership, helping shape strategy, build momentum, mobilise collaboration, and tell the story of a destination that people choose not just to visit, but to belong to.

The integration of business events into place leadership is not a guarantee of success. It is an opportunity, one that depends on context, capability, relationships and timing.

What this white paper seeks to demonstrate is that conditions are increasingly favourable. Global mobility, knowledge-driven economies and competition between places have elevated the importance of convening, collaboration and narrative. Business events are uniquely positioned to contribute to these dynamics, provided the sector is willing to evolve its role, invest in new capabilities and engage seriously with the long-term future of the places it serves.

THE CALL

The choice, like the cycle, is now.

A bureau cannot become an intelligence hub on a marketing budget, nor sustain long-term place leadership work on annual hospitality-linked appropriations.

6. Recommendations

This section presents the seven recommendations summarised in the opening of this white paper. Together they set out how the business events sector can optimise its role in place leadership, create fertile ground for future business events, increase recognition and legitimacy, and maximise its contribution to city, regional and national economies and community wellbeing.

Recommendation 1:
Reframe the sector's identity and promote a shared strategic voice

Primary audiences: *Industry associations, including the EIC (Events Industry Council) and JMIC (Joint Meetings Industry Council) and national bodies.*

The business events sector should reframe how it presents itself to governments, policymakers and the public. Moving beyond tourism metrics such as bed nights, delegate spend and venue occupancy, it should build a shared narrative grounded in civic and economic contribution: knowledge exchange, innovation catalysis, talent attraction and place reputation.

This reframing should be adopted as a common communications standard across national and international industry bodies, DMOs, CVBs and venues, with consistency of language, evidence and positioning across all stakeholder-facing communications. Alongside this, the sector should build a collectively resourced, publicly accessible repository of advocacy evidence and case studies, complemented by targeted policy briefs and white papers written in the language of economic development and innovation policy. Without this shift, the sector will continue to be treated as a hospitality sub-sector and excluded from the decisions that shape cities.

Progress indicators:

1.1 Number of major industry bodies that have formally adopted the common civic-and-economic narrative as their primary public-facing positioning.

1.2 Number of case studies and policy briefs lodged in the shared advocacy repository, with 100 as a workable target by 2030.

1.3 Number of national governments and city authorities that have cited the repository in published strategy or policy.

1.4 Share of sector content in major economic development and city-leadership publications, tracked annually.

Recommendation 2:
Embed business events formally in diverse place leadership structures

Primary audiences: *DMOs and CVBs. Local and regional government.*

Civic participation must become a core function of destination management. Industry associations and leading DMOs and CVBs should pursue formal seats in the governance structures that shape city, regional, and national economic strategy: economic development boards, innovation coalitions, climate transition forums, and skills partnerships. Where formal participation is not yet available, the sector should build credibility through consistent, constructive contribution to the forums that matter. Governments and local authorities should, in turn, recognise the sector's convening capacity and create institutional pathways for its involvement. The goal is to move from occasional, informal engagement to permanent presence in the decisions that determine a destination's long-term direction.

Progress indicators:

2.1 Number of DMOs and CVBs holding formal seats on economic development, innovation, climate or skills boards in their jurisdiction.

2.2 Proportion of the top 50 global destinations whose business events function reports into an integrated growth body of the London & Partners or amsterdam&partners type.

2.3 Number of cities with a published place leadership framework that names business events as a strategic function.

2.4 Average tenure of sector representation on civic strategy bodies, as an indicator of institutional stability.

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Recommendation 3:
Align event portfolios with place economic and innovation priorities

Primary audiences: *DMOs, CVBs and venues. Cross-sector partners.*

DMOs and CVBs should map their event calendars against the published economic, innovation, climate and skills priorities of their destination. Bidding decisions, acquisition priorities and programming choices should be oriented towards priority industrial clusters, research and academic ecosystems, and investment attraction narratives. Events should be treated as milestones in sectoral roadmaps rather than standalone commercial wins: the question is not only whether an event can be won, but whether it advances the place's strategic agenda. This alignment requires close, structured relationships with cluster organisations, universities and economic development agencies.

Progress indicators:

3.1 Percentage of major bids that explicitly reference the destination's published economic, innovation, climate or skills strategy.

3.2 Number of events bid for in formal partnership with industrial clusters, universities or research institutions.

3.3 Conversion rate of strategy-aligned bids relative to non-aligned bids.

3.4 Number of destinations publishing an integrated events portfolio strategy.

Recommendation 4:
Make impact, legacy and measurement a single discipline

Primary audiences: *Industry associations. DMOs, CVBs and venues. Cross-sector partners.*

Legacy must become a core competency, designed into the bidding process rather than bolted on after an event is won. The sector should develop and adopt shared frameworks for legacy co-design, bringing universities, civic organisations, businesses and community groups into the process before bid submission, and creating structures through which those commitments can be delivered and verified. Alongside this, the sector should develop and adopt a standard multi-dimensional measurement framework that captures economic impact alongside knowledge transfer, innovation spillovers, talent attraction, environmental performance, community benefit and long-term reputational change. Progress against both legacy commitments and impact indicators should be reported publicly, consistently, and in a form accessible to government and civic audiences.

Progress indicators:

4.1 Number of events using shared legacy co-design frameworks at the bid stage rather than post-event.

4.2 Adoption of the multi-dimensional measurement framework by major DMOs and venues.

4.3 Number of organisations publishing annual multi-dimensional impact reports.

4.4 Number of longitudinal impact studies completed and published, capturing effects over three years or more.

Recommendation 5:
Establish an intelligence-sharing compact with governments at every level

Primary audiences: *Industry associations. National government. Local and regional government.*

The business events sector holds a uniquely rich stream of intelligence on global industry trends, growth sectors, talent movement, investor preferences and destination attractiveness. This intelligence is currently under-used as a public resource. The sector should establish regular mechanisms for sharing this insight with city authorities, economic development agencies and national governments, positioning it as a contribution to evidence-based policymaking rather than as a lobbying tool. Governments, in return, should integrate this input into strategic planning cycles, and recognise the sector's intelligence function as a formal component of its civic contribution.

Progress indicators:

5.1 Number of city, regional and national authorities receiving regular sector intelligence briefings.

5.2 Number of published government strategy documents in innovation, economic development, climate or skills that cite sector intelligence.

5.3 Number of strategic planning reviews with formal sector representation.

5.4 Number of jurisdictions where the sector is named in published policy as a formal strategic partner.

Recommendation 6:
Champion inclusivity and sustainability as civic and competitive obligations

Primary audiences: *All. Industry associations, DMOs, venues, event owners, suppliers and cross-sector partners.*

Sustainability and inclusivity are not optional extras; they are core components of destination competitiveness and civic responsibility. The sector should embed carbon reduction, circular economy principles, local procurement, workforce diversity, accessible programming and community engagement across the full event value chain. Industry-wide codes of conduct, shared standards and peer benchmarking should be established and consistently applied, with public reporting so that progress is visible, accountability is normalised and leading practice is transferable. The goal is not merely compliance, but to position the sector as a visible exemplar of responsible economic activity in every destination it serves.

Progress indicators:

6.1 Number of major events achieving ISO 20121 or equivalent certification

6.2 Sector-wide carbon intensity per participant, in kilograms CO_2 equivalent, tracked annually.

6.3 Adoption of industry-wide codes of conduct on inclusivity and sustainability by major bodies.

6.4 Number of organisations publishing annual inclusivity and sustainability reports against the shared framework.

Recommendation 7:
Build capability, evolve organisations and reform funding, incentives and governance

Primary audiences: *Industry associations. National government. DMOs and CVBs. Cross-sector partners, especially economic development agencies.*

Not all organisations are equally equipped to step into place leadership roles, and a realistic, graduated pathway is more useful than a uniform ambition. Industry bodies should develop a tiered capability programme that allows organisations to progress from strategic literacy through to full civic integration, with shared tools, peer learning and targeted support for smaller players. Alongside capability-building, the sector must address the structural constraints on its place leadership potential: funding models tied to short-term visitor volume metrics, governance mandates dominated by tourism rather than economic development, and institutional positioning that excludes the sector from the decisions that matter most. The sector should advocate for co-funding arrangements with economic development agencies, performance frameworks that include long-term economic and civic indicators, and the formal repositioning of destination management within economic development rather than tourism alone.

Progress indicators:

7.1 Number of organisations completing each stage of the capability pathway annually.

7.2 Number of DMOs receiving co-funding from economic development agencies, alongside or in place of tourism or hospitality channels.

7.3 Number of jurisdictions where the sector has been formally repositioned within economic development at the institutional level.

7.4 Number of senior sector roles filled by professionals with economic development, innovation or industrial policy backgrounds, as a workforce signal of the shift.

Appendix: Self-assessment tool

The following framework is offered as a practical tool for business events organisations to evaluate and monitor progress on their journey towards integrating place leadership. It is designed to prompt reflection on the breadth of an organisation's mandate, across purpose, governance, partnerships, and place leadership, and to identify areas for improvement.

As more organisations adopt this framework and contribute their own assessments, it becomes possible to analyse patterns, identify emerging models, and draw meaningful comparisons across different types of organisations. At national level, it can support conversations between convention bureaux, economic development agencies and tourism or trade departments about how responsibilities are distributed, what resources are needed and how national governments can better support their regional and city DMOs. At international level, it provides a common language for benchmarking across cities and regions, enabling destinations to learn from one another and to understand their own position within a fast-evolving global landscape for business events and place leadership.

Topic	Indicator	To what extent...	Current status	Short-term goal	Long-term ambitions
Purpose and strategic direction	Evolution in purpose, strategy or governance	Have we consciously broadened our mandate beyond event logistics toward a wider place or economic development role?			
	Intentional, measurable goals	Have we set explicit targets beyond volume (e.g. investment attracted, research collaborations, or talent outcomes)?			
	Links to wider outcomes	Are individual events contributing to broader economic, social or innovation goals for the destination?			
	Degree of multi stakeholder/institutional commitment	Is the ownership of the strategy shared across multiple organisations and sectors?			
	Inter-local competition	Have we engaged with dynamics of cross-city or cross-regional competition?			
Place leadership model	Horizontal platforms	Have we convened actors across sectors at the same level through e.g. cross-sector alliances, joint forums, shared frameworks?			
	Vertical integration	Is the model embedded within a wider governance hierarchy, such as a regional economic development agency or national strategy?			
	Industry-specific place leadership	Is event attraction aligned with specific industry clusters or sectoral research priorities?			
	District-specific leadership	Are activities anchored within a defined urban district or regeneration corridor?			
Degree of multi-stakeholder alignment	Convening role	Do we play an explicit role in bringing together stakeholders who would not otherwise meet?			
	Integrated into other organisations	Is our organisation structurally embedded within broader economic development or destination management bodies?			
	Partnership with other destination economy actors	Do we actively collaborate with trade, investment, innovation and tourism partners?			
	Coordination activities through events	Are events used as tools to bring together actors and advance shared strategies?			
	Modern industrial strategy	Are events aligned with our city/region/nation's innovation or industrial development agenda?			
	Broader strategic agendas	Do we engage with others to address civic, sustainability or social priorities?			

27 Case studies

The argument is grounded in 27 destination case studies drawn from across the world, illustrating how this work is being approached in different political, economic and civic contexts.

The following summaries draw on the case study submissions provided by participating destinations. Each summary presents the key dimensions of how that destination is integrating business events into its approach to place leadership and the destination economy.

Amsterdam - Amsterdam Convention Bureau

Population	0.95m (city) / 2.5m (metro)
Geographical remit	City
Economic specialisations	Life sciences, fintech, creative industries, logistics, sustainable technology
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership (vertical)
Key partners	Municipality of Amsterdam; amsterdam&partners; DMOs across the Amsterdam metropolitan area

Amsterdam's economy evolved from a historic trading and financial hub into a diversified knowledge economy. Over two decades, the city has positioned itself as one of Europe's leading start-up ecosystems, building on its strengths in finance and life sciences. Sustainability and liveability now frame all major economic strategies, including the city's doughnut economy model, which guides planning decisions toward circular approaches and prioritises brownfield regeneration and transport-oriented densification over outward expansion. The city's population has been growing steadily, approaching one million residents, intensifying pressure on housing affordability and reinforcing a policy focus on compact urban development.

Amsterdam's sustained appeal as a centre for start-ups, congresses, tourism, talent and research has produced strong, organic connections across the visitor, innovation and civic economies. The Amsterdam Convention Bureau operates within amsterdam&partners, a public-private foundation with over 750 partners aligned with the Municipality of Amsterdam. Its approach prioritises quality and relevance over volume, positioning events within a wider destination system and assessing them for contribution to local ecosystems, societal transitions and lasting impact. Impact is treated as a co-design exercise from the outset, developed in partnership with cultural, academic and business partners. Amsterdam's model integrates international expertise with the city's established strengths in life sciences, technology, sustainability and creative industries, ensuring that international gatherings generate local value alongside global outcomes.

Auckland - Auckland Convention Bureau

Population	1.8m
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Film and TV production, circular economy, creative industries, agri-food technology
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder public partnership
Key partners	Tātaki Auckland Unlimited (cultural, events and destination agency); Auckland Council including its Economic Development Office; central government agencies

Auckland generates approximately 38% of New Zealand's GDP, built on financial services, agri-food technology, and an increasingly digital economy. The Auckland Plan 2050 pursues a compact city model, concentrating growth in and around the city centre and along rapid transit corridors, with infrastructure investment to improve public transport accessibility and housing supply aimed at managing affordability pressures. Auckland's population has been recovering following pandemic-era declines, sustained by renewed net immigration, though housing costs remain a significant constraint on workforce growth.

Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB), housed within Auckland's cultural, events and destination agency Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, has repositioned business events as strategic catalysts for economic development. A defining initiative was the two-day cross-sector forum, 'Unleashing the Potential of Business Events', which brought together industry, government, academics, and economic development agencies to create shared advocacy tools and formalise structured engagement in place leadership. Auckland Convention Bureau now aligns event bids with Auckland's priority industries and research strengths, measuring success through research collaborations, inward investment and talent attraction rather than visitor numbers alone. This evolution addresses a recognised gap: the limited awareness of the broader value for economic resilience. Housing the bureau within an Auckland Council-controlled organisation has enabled the institutional alignment needed to move from transactional event hosting toward sustained civic partnership.

Barcelona - Barcelona Convention Bureau

Population	1.7m city / 5.7m metro area
Geographical remit	City
Economic specialisations	Life sciences and pharmaceuticals, digital technology and AI, creative industries, tourism, logistics, advanced manufacturing
Governance type	Public-private partnership
Key partners	Turisme de Barcelona; Barcelona Activa; Fundació Escleròsi Múltiple; European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE); European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (ECTRIMS); local NGOs, hospitals and patient associations

Barcelona is one of Europe's most prominent business events destinations, consistently ranking among the top five cities globally in the ICCA rankings. The city's economy spans pharmaceuticals, digital technology, creative industries and a fast-growing life sciences and biotech cluster, supported by world-class universities and the 22@ innovation district. Its combination of Mediterranean character, strong international connectivity and deep research infrastructure has made it one of the world's most sought-after congress cities.

In 2025, the Barcelona Convention Bureau launched its Legacy Program, a structured initiative designed to move beyond conventional event metrics and embed congresses within the city's social, economic and research landscape. Developed in response to growing expectations from destinations, local governments and communities for events to generate lasting value, the programme matches each congress to a relevant local challenge or opportunity and co-designs impact projects with a dedicated team of event organisers, Barcelona Convention Bureau staff and local partners. Three collaboration models are available: adapting an existing international legacy project to the Barcelona context; creating a new project from scratch with local partners such as NGOs, hospitals or innovation hubs; or connecting the congress to an already-active city initiative. In each case, the Barcelona Convention Bureau designs, facilitates and evaluates both the short- and long-term impacts.

Two projects from 2025 illustrate the model in practice. ESGE Days, a European endoscopy congress, launched Barcelona's first congress-linked colorectal cancer awareness campaign: targeting communities with low uptake of the Catalan public screening programme, the project included a market awareness day, a school education session and a travelling public exhibition designed to remain in the city for years after the event. ECTRIMS, the flagship multiple sclerosis research congress attracting more than 9,600 international delegates, generated a business inclusion initiative developed jointly with Fundació Escleròsi Múltiple and Barcelona Activa: an online training programme equipping Catalan companies to recruit, include and support employees living with MS. Both projects position the convention bureau as a civic convener, translating the specialist knowledge present in international congresses into durable community and economic benefit.

Berlin - visitBerlin/Berlin Convention Office

Population	3.9m (city) / 6.2m (metropolitan area)
Geographical remit	City
Economic specialisations	Creative industries, tech and digital economy, life sciences, media
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder public partnership
Key partners	Berlin Senate Department for Economic Affairs; Tourismus Marketing Brandenburg; German Convention Bureau; EUREF-campus; Kulturprojekte Berlin

Over the past 15 years, Berlin has developed into a significant European hub for technology start-ups, creative industries and knowledge-intensive services. The city has been prioritising mixed-use densification in inner-city neighbourhoods and the repurposing of major brownfield sites including the former Tegel airport campus and parts of the Tempelhof field, distributing economic activity across all 12 boroughs. Berlin's population has been rapidly growing, driven by sustained in-migration of younger professionals, though housing affordability has become an increasingly significant challenge.

The Berlin Convention Office operates as a strategic convenor, bringing together public authorities, industry associations, cultural institutions and sustainability networks around shared objectives. Its flagship initiative, BESTIVAL, is co-created by a five-agency consortium. Its planning involves cultural organisations, innovation platforms, sustainability networks, club culture representatives and dozens of local suppliers who become genuine partners. The event happens across seven districts and now even beyond the city's boundary, in collaboration with the regional tourism agency. In 2023, it became the first business festival of its kind certified under ISO 20121 for sustainable event management. By 2025, BESTIVAL achieved a 10% reduction in CO_2 emissions per participant compared to 2023, supported by a shared code of conduct signed by all 100-plus suppliers and partners. Berlin's network-based model demonstrates how business events can function as strategic partners in urban development rather than as service providers alone.

Berlin – Estrel

Neukölln has historically been one of Berlin's most economically marginalised districts, with high unemployment, a large migrant population and limited commercial investment. The district has been the focus of targeted regeneration efforts under Berlin's district renewal programme, with investment in public spaces, cultural infrastructure and skills development.

Estrel Berlin illustrates how entrepreneurial private investment can anchor and transform an urban district. A private investment of over €330 million in the Estrel Tower has catalysed wider business investment and urban transformation in Neukölln, a district historically peripheral to Berlin's international tourism and events markets. Through sustained conference and event activity, Estrel has significantly increased the district's visibility, demonstrating how a convention and hotel complex can shape neighbourhood trajectory. It shows how a venue can function as an anchor institution in its own right, attracting businesses, visitors and further investment into areas that might otherwise struggle to compete for international attention. This private-sector approach to place leadership offers a complementary model alongside public-sector strategies.

Calgary – Tourism Calgary

Population	1.6m
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Energy (oil and gas, clean energy transition), financial services, technology, agri-food, sports industry, healthcare and medical research
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Key partners	BMO Centre (Calgary Stampede); City of Calgary; Calgary Sports Council; University of Calgary/Cumming School of Medicine; Alberta Health Services; Calgary Economic Development

Calgary's economy was built on oil and gas, making it one of Canada's most prosperous but commodity-dependent cities. Since 2015, the city has pursued deliberate diversification into technology, clean energy and financial services. A significant catalyst for its meetings and events ambitions was the 2024 completion of the BMO Centre expansion at Stampede Park, now Western Canada's largest convention facility, substantially increasing Calgary's capacity for large-scale international events.

Calgary has developed a focused events strategy around its twin strengths in sports science and health, using the Rivers District and Stampede Park as its primary spatial anchor for this positioning. Calgary Sports Council and Tourism Calgary collaborate formally to attract sports medicine congresses and athletics governance meetings. Events including the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup (hosted annually since 2019) and World Triathlon Championship Series visits have connected sports performance research at the University of Calgary to international federations and equipment technology companies, generating lasting institutional partnerships. A cross-sector alliance between the Cumming School of Medicine, Alberta Health Services and the BMO Centre co-develops bids for cardiology, oncology and population health congresses, with post-event research partnerships documented as a formal success metric. This model demonstrates that place leadership in business events does not require large-city infrastructure but deliberate cross-sector coordination.

Canada - Destination Canada

Population	41.5m
Geographical remit	National (multi-city coordination)
Economic specialisations	AI and advanced technology, agribusiness, finance and insurance, advanced manufacturing (including clean technology and clean growth), life sciences (including Iinnovation, research and development) and tourism
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder national coordination
Key partners	Provincial, territorial and municipal DMOs

Canada's population has been among the fastest growing economies in the developed world, thanks to its welcoming immigration strategy. Its economy, built on natural resource exports, has expanded through financial services, technology, clean energy, and a well-established but growing aerospace and advanced manufacturing base.

Destination Canada has repositioned business events as instruments of ecosystem building rather than event marketing. Its Legacy & Impact Study demonstrates that the greatest long-term impacts arise when outcomes are intentionally designed, stakeholders are engaged early, and events are embedded in broader economic and community strategies. Destinations across Canada are increasingly acting as conveners that bring together tourism organisations, economic development agencies, indigenous communities, universities, industry leaders and residents around shared outcomes. Canada's experience suggests that the future of destination development lies in moving beyond measuring visitors toward measuring value, with business events playing an important role in serving as platforms for knowledge exchange, innovation, talent attraction, investment and sector growth.

Cape Town - Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau

Population	4.8m (Cape Town Metro)/7.5m (Western Cape Province)
Geographical remit	Regional (city-region and provincial)
Economic specialisations	Tourism, financial services, ICT/tech, renewable energy, agri-processing, ocean economy, creative industries
Governance type	Public-public horizontal partnership
Key partners	City of Cape Town; Western Cape Provincial Government; Wesgro (joint trade, investment and tourism promotion agency); Southern African Association for the Conference Industry; Tourism Business Council of South Africa

Cape Town and the Western Cape have pursued active economic diversification beyond tourism and agriculture, building a growing tech sector, renewable energy industry and creative economy. The region's natural assets, expanding startup ecosystem and democratic openness attract talent as well as domestic and international investment. The city region has been densifying along transit corridors and investing in the regeneration of its inner city.

Cape Town and the Western Cape are developing an integrated destination economy that aligns tourism, trade, investment promotion and knowledge convening into a single place proposition. This is enabled by Wesgro's mandate across tourism, trade and investment promotion. More than just a venue provider, the Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau has positioned itself to attract events in priority economic sectors, including energy and renewables, ICT, manufacturing, health and agri-processing. This sector-driven positioning strengthens the destination's value proposition by clearly articulating the strategic relevance of hosting events in the region and reinforcing a clear "why here, why now" narrative for associations and industry communities. Through programmes that incorporate towns, rural districts and emerging tourism nodes across the Western Cape, the city region aims to support spatial inclusion objectives and reinforce its positioning as a multi-centre destination. Priorities for the sector include credible measurement of economic and social impact, investment in skills across the events value chain and continued improvement in air connectivity.

Catalunya - Catalunya Convention Bureau

Population	8.2m
Geographical remit	Regional
Economic specialisations	Mobility, life sciences, technology, food, green business, industrial systems, sport
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership (vertical and horizontal)
Key partners	Catalan Tourist Board (ACT); Catalonia Trade & Investment; Office for the Transformation of the Automotive and Mobility Sector; Catalan Department of Sports; industry clusters and hubs

Spain's most economically productive region, Catalonia generates approximately 20% of the national GDP. A recognised leader in life sciences, innovation, automotive and advanced manufacturing, the region benefits from a diversified economy. While Barcelona's evolution into a leading knowledge and innovation centre has elevated the region's international profile, Catalonia is increasingly focused on promoting balanced territorial growth by attracting investment, talent and infrastructure throughout the region.

The Catalunya Convention Bureau plays a strategic role in strengthening the region's competitiveness through a sector-based segmentation strategy that aligns business events with Catalonia's key economic industries. Three flagship initiatives exemplify this approach. Catalunya Meetings & Mobility aligns international events with Catalonia's automotive and mobility sectors, reinforcing strategic economic sectors and accelerating the transition to sustainable mobility through networking, knowledge exchange, talent development, and the attraction of investment in areas such as battery technology and electric vehicle manufacturing. **Catalunya Meetings & Sports** integrates the business events industry into the region's dynamic sports ecosystem, linking global professionals with innovation hubs, research centres and technology companies. **Catalunya Meetings & Tech** reflects Catalonia's continuous innovation spirit and strong commitment to leveraging technological development as a transformative driver for the meetings and events sector. It positions the region to host forward-looking professional events that connect global tech communities with local innovation ecosystems, fostering collaboration, talent exchange and industry growth.

These initiatives are developed in collaboration with industry leaders, private industry clusters and specialised public bodies. By connecting business events with strategic industries, this approach also supports the transformation and diversification of the meetings and events sector, enabling it to deliver greater value, differentiation and long-term competitiveness. The CCB's partnership with Catalonia Trade & Investment connects business events with investment attraction and international companies and innovation projects, transforming events into opportunities for investment, business collaboration and talent attraction.

Through this collaborative approach, business events become catalysts for innovation, investment attraction and economic development, while also serving as long-term ambassadors for the region's knowledge, innovation and industrial capabilities.

Copenhagen - Copenhagen Convention Bureau

Population	1.4m
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Life sciences and pharma, shipping and logistics, clean technology, food innovation, design, digital health
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Key partners	City of Copenhagen; Copenhagen Convention Bureau; Innovation District Copenhagen; Copenhagen Capacity; Business Region Copenhagen; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Confederation of Danish Industry; HealthTech Hub

Copenhagen has shifted from a shipping and manufacturing economy toward life sciences, clean technology and knowledge-intensive services. Denmark's mature innovation ecosystem, strong welfare infrastructure, and tight industry-university linkages have positioned the city as a leading European hub for health innovation and green transition, anchored by Novo Nordisk and Maersk.

Copenhagen's convention strategy is directly integrated with Denmark's Life Science Strategy 2030, which underpins one of the country's most important export sectors. The establishment of Innovation District Copenhagen (IDC), a life-science cluster anchored by the University of Copenhagen and associated research institutions, has given the Convention Bureau a strategic partner for congress development. Together, they are designing congress attraction and legacy initiatives calibrated to IDC's long-term ambitions, with investment attraction for Danish life-science companies and new projects as defined success indicators. Copenhagen Health Innovation Week was created specifically to connect global life-science networks with Danish start-up/scale-up companies seeking capital. This model demonstrates how a convention bureau can become embedded within an industrial strategy, with events functioning as tools for cluster development rather than standalone commercial activity.

Croatia - Croatian National Tourist Board

Population	3.9m
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Tourism, IT services, shipbuilding, agri-food, maritime industries, renewable energy
Governance type	Public
Key partners	Ministry of Tourism and Sport; regional and local tourist boards; Croatian Convention Bureau

Croatia's economy has relied heavily on tourism, contributing around 20% of GDP when indirect effects are included. Since joining the European Union in 2013, Croatia has seen growing diversification into ICT, digital services and knowledge-based industries, and national and regional development strategies increasingly support a more balanced distribution of economic activity across Croatia, strengthening regional urban centres such as Osijek, Rijeka and Split alongside Zagreb.

Sustained tourism growth and increasing diversification into creative industries, technology and sustainable practices are changing Croatia's destination economy. Focus is now more on year-round visitation, authentic local experiences and digital transformation of service delivery. New governance models are emerging that bring together public authorities, private sector operators, local communities and development agencies in more collaborative frameworks. The sector has strengthened capacity in flexible and hybrid event delivery and is working to build its role as a bridge between international professional networks and Croatian communities, contributing to a more diversified and resilient destination economy.

Denmark - MeetDenmark

Population	6m
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Robotics and automation, life sciences, clean energy, food technology, maritime
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Key partners	Danish Board of Business Development; Destination Fyn; Odense Robotics; University of Southern Denmark; Copenhagen Convention Bureau; VisitAarhus; Destination NORD

Denmark's economy is built on high-value exports in pharmaceuticals, renewable energy and food technology, and is widely regarded as one of the world's most sustainable, having positioned itself as a global leader in wind power and the green transition. The country's reputation as an easy place to do business, combined with a flexible labour market and strong public institutions, has helped Denmark punch well above its size as a hub for innovation and attract international talent and investment.

One of MeetDenmark's key initiatives is to build bridges between the country's four congress destinations and national clusters. With support from the Danish Board of Business Development, the Valuable Meetings initiative embeds congress attraction within a broader innovation and competitiveness strategy. This approach recognises how congress attraction brings visibility to local companies, their products and services. The four cluster-destination partnerships are Wonderful Copenhagen (Copenhagen Convention Bureau) and Danish Life Science Cluster; Destination NORD and Green Hub Denmark, VisitAarhus and CLEAN, and Destination Fyn and Odense Robotics. MeetDenmark then facilitates knowledge-sharing so that lessons from one partnership strengthen the others, creating a national learning system for place-based congress strategy.

The partnership between Destination Fyn and Odense Robotics (380 members within robotics, automation and drone technologies) illustrates how strategic alignment between a congress destination, an industry cluster and a university can transform business events into instruments of economic development. Congresses are bid for only when there is demonstrable alignment with the strategic priorities of the cluster, university, municipalities, partners and regional development plans. This approach has led to a 66% conversion rate in the robotics sector and the 2027 hosting of ISARC, one of the world's leading robotics congresses, is one of its biggest successes. By integrating tourism with innovation policy, expanding success metrics and fostering multilevel governance, the case provides a compelling model for how congress attraction can generate broad and lasting value at both regional and national levels.

Dubai - Dubai Business Events (DBE)

Population	4m
Geographical remit	City-state
Economic specialisations	Trade, logistics, tourism, finance, meetings and events
Governance type	Government-led
Key partners	Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism; Dubai World Trade Centre Authority; Dubai Culture and Arts Authority; Dubai Chambers; Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Government Excellence

Dubai has pursued one of the most deliberate economic diversification strategies of the modern era, shifting from oil dependency to trade, finance, logistics and tourism over three decades. Its investment in flagship events and infrastructure, air connectivity and economic free zones have made it the Middle East's primary business and convention gateway. With a fast-growing population, Dubai is directing growth towards five key districts, connected by public transit, prioritising mixed-use development.

Dubai Business Events' hosting of the 27th General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2025 marked a significant moment in the city's transition toward a knowledge-driven destination economy. The first ICOM General Conference held in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, it welcomed approximately 4,000 delegates and adopted six resolutions shaping the global museum ecosystem. Dubai Business Events led the full bid strategy in close partnership with the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, and coordinated across government entities, cultural institutions and venues to align the event with Dubai's broader economic diversification and knowledge-economy objectives. This included collaboration on programme design, educational content, marketing, production and delegate experience. The event demonstrated Dubai's collaborative model of place leadership, in which national cultural priorities, local agency expertise and institutional relationships align to produce events that contribute to its diversification agenda and generate long-term positioning value.

Gothenburg - Gothenburg Convention Bureau/Göteborg & Co

Population	1.1m
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Automotive, maritime and shipping, life sciences, logistics, sustainable energy, research
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder horizontal partnership
Key partners	City of Gothenburg; Business Region Göteborg; Chalmers University of Technology; University of Gothenburg; Region Västra Götaland; Sahlgrenska University Hospital

Gothenburg built its identity around heavy industry (automotive, manufacturing, shipbuilding, and port trade) but has spent the last decades pivoting towards knowledge-intensive sectors, anchored by Volvo's R&D, Chalmers University and an expanding life sciences cluster. Gothenburg's regional population has grown steadily, with the city attracting younger professionals and international researchers to an increasingly diversified economy.

Place leadership in Gothenburg is distributed, with Göteborg & Co taking a coordinating role, while implementation is carried out collectively with public authorities, industry and academia. Strategies are co-created across sectors. The Gothenburg Convention Bureau, celebrating 40 years of operation in 2026, is embedded within this programme through a dedicated action plan, reflecting a long tradition of using business events as tools for economic development. A new Destination Development department was created in 2025 to support integration between tourism, urban development and social goals. Gothenburg's approach demonstrates how a mid-sized city can build sustained strategic alignment between convention activity and broader place objectives through governance design and collaboration rather than centralised authority.

For more than three decades, the city has pursued a deliberate strategy of clustering major events, meetings and visitor attractions within a concentrated area including major arenas, the Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre, Liseberg Amusement Park, Universeum and World of Volvo. Today, the Event District is entering a new phase of development, with plans for a new arena, hotels, housing, sports facilities and public spaces. Gothenburg Convention Bureau also coordinates with Gothenburg's innovation districts for bid identification and development and organises site visits to GoCo Health Innovation City for international life science meetings.

Iceland - Meet in Reykjavík (Iceland Convention Bureau)

Population	250,000 (metropolitan area)/400,000 (national)
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, renewable energy (geothermal and hydro), creative industries
Governance type	Public-public vertical partnership
Key partners	Business Iceland; Icelandic Tourist Board; City of Reykjavík; Ministry of Industries and Innovation

Iceland transformed from a fisheries and aluminium economy into a tourism-led, increasingly knowledge-based one. The 2008 financial crisis prompted radical economic reform, with tourism emerging as a primary growth driver. Iceland's 100% renewable energy system now attracts sustainable-tech investment, supporting a distinctive convention positioning around nature, innovation and resilience.

Meet in Reykjavík, Iceland Convention Bureau has been central to Iceland's shift from a volume-driven tourism model toward a value-based, year-round, knowledge-intensive economy. The bureau provides a focal point for international business events work across Iceland. The compact scale of Iceland's governance system enables close, practical collaboration between public authorities, key institutions and industry partners, with leadership exercised through co-delivery. Business events are deployed to attract high-value professional communities in fields aligned with Iceland's natural research strengths (geothermal energy, marine science and sustainability), extending economic and reputational impact well beyond direct delegate activity. Iceland's model illustrates the advantages of small, cohesive systems where alignment between city, national and institutional actors can be achieved quickly and maintained effectively.

India - MMACTIV Sci Tech Communications Pvt. Ltd.

Population	1.4bn
Geographical remit	National (multi-city coordination across major metros)
Economic specialisations	IT and software, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, financial services, agri-food, textiles, tourism
Governance type	Public-public vertical partnership (national and state level)
Key partners	Ministry of Tourism; state tourism departments; India Trade Promotion Organisation; Indian Exhibition Industry Association; India Convention Promotion Bureau; Bharat Mandapam; Yashobhoomi; CIDCO Exhibition and Convention Center

India's economy is being reshaped by technology, advanced manufacturing, digital innovation and high-value services, with globally recognised strengths in IT, pharmaceuticals, engineering and emerging semiconductor ecosystems. Supported by significant investment in convention infrastructure across more than 100 cities, India is leveraging business events to connect global expertise with national development priorities and regional growth opportunities.

India is undergoing a fundamental shift in how its cities are positioned globally, from consumption centres to hubs of innovation, research, investment and knowledge exchange. As destinations increasingly align with sector-specific economic strengths, business events are playing a growing role in shaping industry ecosystems, fostering collaboration and enhancing international competitiveness. This evolution is helping cities differentiate themselves while contributing to broader economic and social development objectives.

Business events organisers, including MMACTIV Sci Tech Communications, are evolving beyond their traditional role as event producers to become strategic convenors of industry, government, academia and investors. National initiatives including Make in India, Digital India and Viksit Bharat 2047 provide policy frameworks through which congresses, exhibitions and association meetings can support industrial priorities, talent development, research collaboration and long-term economic growth. As a result, business events are increasingly recognised not only as drivers of visitor economy impact but also as catalysts for innovation, investment and destination development.

Ireland - Fáilte Ireland

Population	5.3m
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Pharmaceuticals and biotech, technology; financial services, agri-food, tourism
Governance type	Public (national state agency)
Key partners	Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Dublin Convention Bureau, Cork Convention Bureau, Kerry Convention Bureau, Shannon Conference & Sports Bureau, Galway Convention Bureau, Tourism Ireland and IDA Ireland

Ireland transformed into a global hub for US tech and pharma multinationals, now among Europe's highest-income economies. With Dublin's population growing rapidly, the national government aims to reduce pressure on Dublin's housing market and infrastructure by prioritising compact growth in existing urban centres and redistributing investment more evenly across five regional cities.

The hosting of the International Social Housing Festival (ISHF) in Dublin in 2025 demonstrates Fáilte Ireland's approach to business events as catalysts for integrated place leadership. Led by the Irish Council for Social Housing with support from national agencies, the festival brought together policymakers, housing bodies, academics, community organisations, international experts and residents around shared challenges of housing affordability, climate resilience and social inclusion.

Fáilte Ireland and the Dublin Convention Bureau supported the bid and applied their Association Conference Impact & Legacy Framework to shape the event's social legacy programme. The ISHF illustrates how business events can create platforms for policymaking and cross-sector collaboration.

Israel - Israel Ministry of Tourism

Population	10.2m
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	High-tech and cybersecurity, pharmaceuticals, defence technology, industrial manufacturing,
Governance type	Public-public partnership
Key partners	Tel Aviv-Yafo Convention Bureau; Jerusalem Convention Bureau; regional development agencies

Israel's economy is built on a world-leading technology sector, spanning cybersecurity, defence, life sciences and AI, earning it a global reputation as the "Start-Up Nation." With one of the highest densities of start-ups and venture capital per capita in the world, the country is widely seen as an innovation powerhouse. Yet this reputation increasingly sits alongside concerns about political instability, regional conflict and internal divisions that have raised questions about the long-term resilience of its business environment.

Israel's destination economy is becoming increasingly integrated, with tourism recognised not only as a visitor industry but as a catalyst for economic growth, innovation, talent attraction, investment and place development. At the national level, the Ministry of Tourism works closely with municipalities, regional development agencies and industry stakeholders to align tourism development with broader economic and community objectives, while cross-sector partnerships are increasingly forming coherent narratives and long-term development plans.

Cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and emerging destinations in the Negev and Galilee are adopting destination-based strategies that integrate tourism, urban development, innovation, sustainability and quality of life. The involvement of the CVBs in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, together with international associations and industry partners, has helped align meetings with Israel's strengths in technology, life sciences, agri-technology, and cybersecurity. Tel Aviv-Yafo and Jerusalem Convention Bureaux have expanded their role from bidding for events to strategic ecosystem coordination, working with national and city-level partners to position the country as a hub for innovation-driven congresses and professional meetings.

Luxembourg - Luxembourg Convention Bureau

Population	690,000
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Financial services, ICT and digital, health, space technologies, sustainable finance, logistics
Governance type	Public-public vertical partnership
Key partners	Luxembourg City; Luxembourg City Tourism Office; Luxembourg Ministry of the Economy; Business Luxembourg; Luxinnovation

With Europe's highest GDP per capita, a dense concentration of EU institutions, and a growing space and digital sector, Luxembourg's convention offer carries a distinctively policy-oriented, regulatory dimension.

Luxembourg Convention Bureau is co-financed by Luxembourg City and the Ministry of the Economy. The bureau focuses on sustainable finance, digital innovation and space technologies, areas that align with Luxembourg's national industrial strategy. Luxembourg's compact scale enables close coordination between national economic strategy and municipal destination management, with European institutional density, cross-border workforce mobility, and research actors all contributing to the destination's appeal. The Luxembourg model demonstrates how institutional design can determine a destination's strategic capacity to influence which events it hosts and what those events are expected to deliver.

Madrid - Madrid Convention Bureau

Population	3.4m (city) / 6.7m (Community of Madrid)
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Finance, tourism, technology, media, logistics, retail, real estate
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Key partners	Madrid City Council (Madrid Destino); Community of Madrid; IFEMA Madrid; private sector associations

Spain's financial hub and capital, Madrid is now seeing the emergence of a technology and logistics sector. Major urban development projects are creating new business and residential areas to balance growth across the metropolitan area. Already the third largest city in Europe, Madrid's population is expected to continue growing as more international talent choose to settle in the city.

Madrid's Convention Bureau has evolved from a service-delivery function into an intermediary leadership model, connecting actors that traditionally operate independently across academia, industry, civic organisations and government. The bureau facilitates collaboration and co-design, embedding sustainability tools such as the MICE Sustainability Guide and PLUS impact management platform across its event community. This ecosystem-based approach reflects a broader shift in how Madrid measures its meetings sector: from volume-based indicators such as delegate numbers and hotel occupancy toward value-based indicators of urban and sectoral contribution. Business events organisations in Madrid began as adopters of sustainability tools and have progressively become strategic collaborators in shaping the city's impact frameworks. Madrid's experience shows how a convention bureau's evolution in mandate, from promotion to facilitation, can change how an entire destination's event sector is positioned and assessed.

New York - Javits Center

Population	8.5m (city) / 20m (metropolitan area)
Geographical remit	District anchor
Economic specialisations	Finance, media, technology, fashion, healthcare, creative industries
Governance type	Public (state-owned and operated)
Key partners	New York State/Empire State Development; NYC Tourism + Conventions; New York Convention Centre Operating Corporation; Hudson Yards development stakeholders; local community boards

With Hudson Yards as a major new business district, New York reasserts its global status. Immigration continues to drive its population up, and the city is promoting housing densification across all five boroughs in response.

Javits Center occupies a central role in New York City's long-term urban development, particularly within the ongoing transformation of Hudson Yards and Manhattan's West Side. As a state-owned entity, Javits Center supports both statewide economic development objectives and local place-making, anchoring activity within a major regeneration corridor. It acts as a platform for sector-specific convening, attracting major conventions that connect the city's financial, healthcare, technology and creative industries with global counterparts.

The Center has evolved from a venue into a civic nexus, with one of its main priorities being to give back to the community. It invests in workforce development programmes, community partnerships and public education programmes. The Center has put sustainability at the core of its strategy. In addition to a rooftop solar farm – the largest in Manhattan, it includes a green roof, a rooftop farm and bird hatching centre. These initiatives not only benefit local communities and wildlife, but they also benefit the business events sector with unique, distinctive activities for visitors such as farm-to-table experiences.

New Zealand - Tourism New Zealand

Population	5.3m
Geographical remit	National (multi-city: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown, Rotorua)
Economic specialisations	Agritech, high value food and beverage, tourism, film and creative industries, digital and tech, financial services, advanced manufacturing, aerospace
Governance type	Public multi-stakeholder (national coordination with regional bodies)
Key partners	Regional tourism organisations including Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, WellingtonNZ, ChristchurchNZ; industry association Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA)

New Zealand's economy is built on agricultural exports and has expanded through tourism, film production, creative industries and growing digital, aerospace and advanced manufacturing sectors. The country's strategy to attract skilled workers has been successful, with renewed immigration inflows particularly from the Asia Pacific region, but it has worsened affordability pressures particularly in Auckland and Wellington.

New Zealand's approach reflects a national-level commitment to using professional meetings to advance sectors including agritech, environmental science, health research, aerospace and Māori innovation. Tourism New Zealand's Conference Assistance Programme operates as a targeted investment mechanism, directing business events support toward congresses and association meetings that align with New Zealand's priority economic and research sectors. Bid support is conditional on demonstrable alignment with national strategic objectives and the support of a subject-specific bid champion from a New Zealand research institute, university or industry organisation. By embedding economic criteria into bidding decisions, New Zealand has built a model in which business events bids are made in strategic partnership with government, ensuring that conference attraction contributes measurably to New Zealand's long-term positioning as a high-value, knowledge-intensive destination.

São Paulo – São Paulo Convention & Visitors Bureau

Population	23.5m (metropolitan area)/45m (State)
Geographical remit	Metropolitan (with state-wide event distribution across 645 municipalities)
Economic specialisations	Finance and banking, advanced manufacturing, agri-business services, technology and startups, healthcare, creative industries
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership (public-private)
Key partners	São Paulo Convention & Visitors Bureau (SPCVB); São Paulo Secretaria de Turismo; City of São Paulo; FIESP (Federation of Industries); University of São Paulo (USP); Invest SP

São Paulo is Latin America's economic capital, generating approximately 10% of Brazil's GDP and anchoring the country's financial services, advanced manufacturing and agri-business sectors. The state's 645 municipalities account for over one-third of Brazil's economic output, making it simultaneously the country's industrial heartland and its fastest-growing technology and innovation hub.

The Municipal Department of Tourism (SMTUR) has increasingly positioned business events as strategic instruments for broader city objectives, including economic development, international positioning and the strengthening of local tourism value chains. Working alongside public and private stakeholders, SMTUR actively supports the sustainable development of business events in ways designed to generate long-term economic, social and environmental benefits for both visitors and local communities.

Within this framework, the SPCVB distributes events beyond the capital into regional clusters: Campinas for technology and agri-business, Santos for port and logistics, and São José dos Campos for aerospace, ensuring congresses extend economic benefit into secondary cities. A formal cross-sector legacy framework, developed jointly with FIESP (the Federation of Industries of São Paulo) and the University of São Paulo's Institute of Advanced Studies, maps major congresses against state industry clusters to identify post-event partnership opportunities with local research centres, startup accelerators and industry associations. Medical and agricultural technology congresses hosted since 2022 have generated over 80 documented researcher-to-researcher follow-ups with São Paulo institutions.

This multi-level governance model, with SMTUR coordinating city strategy, SPCVB managing distribution and legacy, and InvestSP and academic partners providing sectoral depth, represents a systematic approach to place leadership in which business events are explicitly positioned as tools for industrial and civic development.

Singapore - Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

Population	6.1m
Geographical remit	National
Economic specialisations	Finance, logistics, biomedical sciences, aerospace, ICT, trade, petrochemicals, meetings and events
Governance type	Government-led (highly coordinated)
Key partners	Economic Development Board; Enterprise Singapore; Urban Redevelopment Authority

Over the past decade, Singapore has focused on economic diversification into digital, green, and biomedical sectors while managing the competitive pressures of an increasingly sophisticated regional economy. The city is creating new regional centres to distribute economic activity beyond its central business district and historic core.

Singapore's business events sector benefits from world-class infrastructure, exceptional global connectivity, and a government-private sector collaboration model that creates stable, transparent operating conditions. The Singapore Tourism Board has shifted from destination marketing toward ecosystem coordination, supporting major events such as Singapore Airshow and Food & Hospitality Asia as platforms for industry development. Legacy design is embedded in event planning: the Worldchefs Congress & Expo 2024 partnered with Nestlé Professional to run children's healthy eating workshops, extending its impact into community benefit. Singapore's model demonstrates how stable governance, institutional trust and deliberate partnership design can position a city as the preferred convening point for globally mobile professional communities.

Sydney - Business Events Sydney (BESydney)

Population	5.3m
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Finance, professional services, technology and digital, healthcare, tourism, education, creative industries
Governance type	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Key partners	Destination NSW; Tourism Australia; ICC Sydney; UNSW; University of Sydney; Investment NSW; NSW Education Department

Australia's financial capital and primary international gateway, Sydney's economy has diversified toward a technology-led new economy, with major investment in innovation precincts and the new Western Sydney Airport. It is redistributing its economic activity westward, to reduce the dominance of its central business district. With three distinct urban cores, and new mixed-use development, the city region aims to accommodate its growing population.

Sydney's successful bid to host the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in 2025 demonstrates how the business events sector can take a much more proactive and strategic role in place leadership. BESydney assembled a coalition involving the NSW Government, the Australian Space Agency, local industry and academia around a shared objective: establishing Australia's credibility within the global space economy. BESydney positioned itself as a facilitator of relationships and a narrator of Sydney's innovation strengths, curating cross-sector collaboration and translating local capabilities into internationally competitive bid content.

BESydney and IAC worked with the NSW Department of Education as a key partner, translating the global congress into curriculum-linked experiences for schools across the state. This collaboration enabled students and teachers to connect directly with the event via programmes such as Young Space Explorers (a major Space Day activation featuring hands-on STEM activities, robotics and VR experiences) and broader IAC Space Week initiatives, delivered in partnership with government and cultural organisations. Additional engagement included teacher-focused programmes like the Australian Space Curriculum Collaborative and student competitions (e.g. mission patch design), ensuring participation both during and beyond the event. Together, these initiatives extended the congress beyond delegates, delivering measurable education outcomes and inspiring future STEM pathways for NSW students.

The IAC 2025 Community Day, delivered as a public "Space Day", opened the congress to the broader community through a free, all-ages experience designed to showcase the value and impact of the space sector. Held at the conclusion of the Sydney congress, it attracted more than 10,000 attendees and featured a mix of astronaut meet-and-greets, live demonstrations, interactive STEM activities and city-wide activations, with a strong focus on engaging students and inspiring future talent. A major public-facing festival layer alongside the congress, the event helped position Sydney as a leader in science, innovation and public engagement while delivering meaningful education and legacy outcomes.

Taiwan – MEET Taiwan

Population	23.3m
Geographical remit	National (hubs in Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung)
Economic specialisations	Semiconductors, ICT and electronics, biomedical, advanced manufacturing, green energy
Governance type	Public-public partnership
Key partners	International Trade Administration, Ministry of Economic Affairs; TAITRA (Taiwan External Trade Development Council)

The International Trade Administration, Ministry of Economic Affairs, is Taiwan's lead agency for the business events industry and sponsors MEET TAIWAN (Taiwan MICE Promotion Programme), which is implemented by TAITRA (Taiwan External Trade Development Council). The programme plays a central role in strengthening Taiwan's position as a global economic player and an innovation-driven destination.

Taiwan anchors the global semiconductor supply chain through TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) and a dense network of advanced manufacturers, while also building strengths in ICT and electronics, biomedical industries, advanced manufacturing and green energy. Long-term demographic pressures, including an ageing population, make talent attraction, international knowledge exchange and global industry networks increasingly important to Taiwan's future growth.

Rather than concentrating its business events strategy in a single city, Taiwan is developing a business events corridor across Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan and Kaohsiung. These hubs connect events infrastructure with science parks, universities, research institutes and industrial clusters, allowing international congresses and exhibitions to engage directly with relevant sectors.

MEET TAIWAN provides the platform for turning this industrial geography into a coordinated business events strategy. Through MEET TAIWAN, congresses and exhibitions can access support, including subsidies for bidding, promotion and hosting, as well as site inspections, government endorsement and introductions to industry clusters. Together, these mechanisms position business events not as isolated projects, but as strategic platforms that connect government, industry, research and destination partners in support of Taiwan's industrial positioning, knowledge exchange and long-term competitiveness.

Tel Aviv - Tel Aviv Convention Bureau

Population	470,000 (city)/4m (metropolitan area)
Geographical remit	Metropolitan
Economic specialisations	Technology and startups, fintech, cybersecurity, life sciences, sustainable urban mobility, creative industries
Governance type	Municipal public partnership
Key partners	Tel Aviv Municipality: Transportation Authority; Environmental Services Department; Strategic Planning Department; Tel Aviv Convention Bureau

Known globally for its quality of life and cultural energy, Tel Aviv has also risen to the ranks of the world's leading cities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Two decades of investment in cycling infrastructure, micromobility and public transport is strengthening its positioning as a global hub for urban innovation and sustainable living. However, the city's resilience has been tested following a half-decade of severe macro-shocks, and its business events sector severely impacted by the broader regional and geopolitical uncertainties surrounding it.

Following the decision of the Israel Ministry of Tourism to cancel its national pavilion at IMEX Frankfurt 2025, Tel Aviv-Yafo Convention Bureau initiated a strategic alliance with the Jerusalem Convention Bureau. The bureaux co-developed an evidence-based counterproposal, successfully convincing the Ministry of Tourism to pivot from total cancellation to a downsized, yet highly strategic, national presence at IMEX. Following this success, the two bureaux drafted a comprehensive national meetings and events roadmap, articulating the broader civic and economic contributions of business events. The roadmap was officially adopted by the Ministry of Tourism and substantially increased the national meetings and events budget for 2026.

This newly secured funding currently supports a streamlined presence at IMEX Frankfurt and IMEX America, as well as a specialized B2B buyer event co-funded equally by the Ministry and both bureaux. In addition, private sector leaders in Israel's business events industry are aware of the efforts made by the CVBs to advance the sector, and they support and collaborate in these efforts. By bridging the gap between municipal execution and national policy, this collaboration has enabled both CVBs to collectively build systemic resilience, shift national tourism strategy, and co-author the upcoming national meetings and events budget and operational roadmap for 2027 alongside the Ministry of Tourism.

The Tel Aviv Convention Bureau has also evolved toward a model of strategic municipal convening, connecting the city's technology and sustainability ambitions with international professional networks. It brought together multiple city departments including the Transportation Authority, Environmental Services and Strategic Planning to bid for VELO-CITY, the world's leading cycling and urban mobility congress. Although the bid was not yet successful, the collaboration has created a cross-departmental coordination platform that continues to support the city's sustainable mobility goals beyond the bid itself.

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