

OVERVIEW

DOMESTIC BUSINESS EVENTS SECTOR



**BUSINESS
EVENTS
VICTORIA**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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We acknowledge Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) for their partnership and industry expertise applied in developing the content for the Business Events toolkits. Operating since 1975, MEA is the Australian event industry 's oldest and largest peak body. It serves its members and educates the industry holistically, dedicating itself to promoting professionalism and providing excellence across more than 14 industry sub-sectors. MEA promotes growth in the events sector by creating business opportunities, delivering both accredited and bespoke training and professional development, building a skilled and informed workforce, and advocating on behalf of industry to all tiers of government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Business Events Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Aboriginal Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respects to them, their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future Traditional Owners.



BUSINESS EVENTS TOOLKIT

Explore the other toolkits



Overview of the domestic business events sector

Business events basics - getting ready to host a business event



Business events marketing guidelines

Proposals - responding to requests and creating winning proposals



Sustainability - opportunities and expectations

Managing the business event



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WHAT IS A BUSINESS EVENT?

A business event is one hosted by an organisation and focused on the industry activities. This is in direct contrast with leisure or social events. While both are often enjoyable and bring people together, a business event is a work activity and those attending (sometimes called delegates) are usually there as a representative of their employer or their work identity.

A business event differs from a business meeting taking place in the organisation's own offices. These events are held off-site and are usually noted to have in excess of 15 attendees (BECA, 2019). Business events are varied and include a broad spectrum of activities discussed later in this toolkit in the section *Types of Business Events*. Some events may be 'one-off' or infrequent whilst other organisations may hold an annual event or several events regularly.

There is a strong link between business events and tourism though, as many international and national business events look for interesting destinations to host the event as these act as a drawcard for attendees. Australia is seen internationally as a safe and secure destination with excellent business event facilities and world class beauty and natural environments (Tourism Australia, 2022) which appeals to the international conference organiser who add tourism experience as part of the business event offering and the attendees who add a holiday to their trip. This also works for the domestic business event organiser and delegate who use the unique selling points of a regional or non-traditional destination to make a point of difference to encourage attendance.

THE VALUE OF BUSINESS EVENTS TO AUSTRALIA

Economic value

Business events are a major economic benefit to Australia and each Australian state. The [2019 research report by Business Events Council of Australia \(BECA\)](#) found that nationally :

- 43.7 million people attended a business event in Australia that year
- There were 484,000 business events held
- Business events injected \$35.7 billion direct industry expenditure into the Australian economy overall
- 229,000 people are directly employed in the business events industry

Tourism Australia reported in its June 2021 Domestic Market Performance, that there were over 2.01K business trips generating 6.29K overnight stays. In the wake of COVID, Tourism Australia's [Domestic Corporate Sentiment Research \(June 2022\)](#) for business events found that:

- 67% of businesses are planning business events in the next 6 to 12 months
- 74% of businesses are planning business events in the next 12 to 24 months
- 60% of businesses expect this will involve some form of travel
- 94% of businesses were planning these events in their home state, showing that working in the local or state marketplace is important
- Over 80% of businesses expected number of attendees to be the same or greater than pre-Covid

Locally, Business Events Victoria in its Strategic Plan 2019-2022 outlined that the business events sector is worth an estimated \$475 million to the regional Victorian economy and supports over 3,000 regional jobs annually.

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Beyond economic value

There are other significant values to Australia beyond the important economic value. Business events encourage local, regional and international trade and business opportunities and business to business relationships are formed and strengthened. Business events are a great way to stimulate the knowledge economy in a region or area as meetings and events provide opportunities for local communities to attract experts that can help them achieve their own economic, investment and social objectives. These events also build capacity and capability in the team and in the community, using the skills learned to create other events, products and to retain staff and enrich their jobs and working experience. Moreover, they engender community wellbeing by improving services for local community and becoming a source of community pride.

TYPES OF BUSINESS EVENTS

A business event usually includes some formal, planned activities designed to achieve a specific business objective for everyone involved. These objectives can be varied depending on the organisation hosting the event and the attendees, but some common objectives include:

- Information sharing within an industry or organisation
- Education and professional development to inform or upskill participants
- Building product or brand awareness
- Networking – most business events include an opportunity for attendees to share ideas with each other informally and build or enhance their networks by getting to know each other better

Business events are often categorised as the MICE sector, a broad term covering :

- Meetings
- Incentives
- Conferences
- Exhibitions

It's useful to consider the wide gamut of events that fall into these categories.

Conference and seminars

These are educational meetings aimed at expanding knowledge; often has social events alongside for networking and relationship building (also called seminars and linked to conventions). A conference or seminar is the most common business event and may last anything from half a day (generally a seminar) to several days (a conference) encompassing a range of topics and speakers and opportunities for special or specific interest sessions occurring concurrently to meet the interests of differing cohorts of attendees.

Larger conferences are typically held in venues (hotels, conference/convention centres) who have capacity to manage multiple spaces at the same time and have inbuilt audio-visual equipment so that attendees can see and hear the speakers and fully engage with the content delivered.

Smaller seminars and meetings often prefer smaller or more bespoke spaces which allow for a greater sense of place for the attendees but all conference type meetings benefit from taking attendees away from their usual work environment and interesting destinations are much sought after to meet this need.

All events of this type will need to be able to serve food and drink to attendees as a lot of the networking takes place around the lunch table or coffee pot.

Conferences also usually have social events around the conference to allow attendees to network with each other and this is where non-traditional venues and experiences provide an ideal change from the traditional working space.

As many attendees will need overnight accommodation, it's helpful for there to be a range of accommodation options nearby if the venue does not have accommodation on site; this does not have to always be in hotels as bed and breakfasts, serviced and non-serviced accommodation may also appeal to some conference attendees.

Training and educational workshops

These business events have a strong educational focus and are designed to provide knowledge or skills or extend those in the participants. Training events tend to need participants to be able to interact effectively with each other through 'round table' discussions or similar and spaces that lend themselves to creative thinking or space to workshop ideas or projects as part of the learning design are very suitable.

Many local businesses and organisations run training courses or educational workshops away from their place of work and these shorter events (usually several hours or a day) may not need complex space layouts or audio-visual equipment.

Product launches

These events are designed to raise awareness about product/service with invited guests being prospective and/or current buyers or customers and sometimes the media in order to generate buzz and interest in the product.

Product launches sometimes need sufficient space to showcase the product but always need an interesting location that compliments the product or adds a layer of interest or wow factor. This type of event allows for smaller spaces and venues and businesses that cannot host larger events to service the business event market. Wineries, beautiful outdoor locations, historic or attractive buildings are often used for product launches.

Networking events

These events are designed to encourage business to business relationships and are often more social than the learning events discussed so far. Many associations or business groups hold regular networking events and a typical format is a stand up function that allows guests to mingle in a suitable space, serving them some light food and drinks (including sometimes alcohol) to encourage people to talk to a wide range of others.

There are often short speeches and a short presentation on behalf of the host organisation so suitable sound equipment may be required. Networking lunches or breakfasts are also common for smaller groups where invited guests from an industry sector or interest group can have more in depth conversations at the table and in the room.

Board Meetings

These are often formal, planning or decision making and may also include Annual General Meetings (AGMs). AGMs may need quite a large space if the organisation has a lot of members or shareholders who need to attend. These are usually quite short meetings, one to two hours on average and in a post-covid environment the capacity for live streaming to an audience dialling in remotely is often needed.

Team building events

These are focused on generating greater teamwork, productivity or cohesiveness by taking team away from the office for interesting activities or a combination of training and activity based learning. These work very well in spaces that allow for outdoor and indoor activities and are often held in non-traditional meeting venues, for example making use of an activity centre or other activity based tourism related experience. This allows the organisers to remove attendees from their usual environment and maximise the potential for teams to concentrate on creative thinking, building relationships or working more collaboratively together to name a few common objectives of this type of event.

Milestone Events

These special occasions celebrate achievements in an organisation, industry sector or group. This may be a gala evening dinner with great food and entertainment or a family day out experience to recognise and include workers' families as a thank you for their support. Large or small, these events are common for organisations who are celebrating longevity of service, awards or significant contribution or time in business.



Exhibitions and trade shows

These can be public exhibitions showcasing products that the general public might find interesting, such as those relating to leisure interests or craft or bespoke clothing, homewares and the like. They may also be linked to a conference or other business event where a range of organisations are able to promote their services or products to interested parties (prospective buyers who are attendees at the conference).

Trade shows and exhibitions are typically included in every major conference and are popular as the exhibitors pay to attend, generating a portion of the revenue generated for the conference by the host organisation. They are popular with exhibitors as trade shows provide them with an opportunity to get in front of important existing customers and potential prospects.

Leadership or departmental retreats

This is when the leadership team or senior managers, or sometimes departments in an organisation, get away from the office to strategise or develop skills or relationships. These tend to be work focused so suitable meeting space and sometimes additional rooms for small group strategising or workshopping of ideas may be needed.

Incentive events

Destinations with interesting tourism experiences are perfect for incentive events. Incentive events are usually used as a reward for attendees who have achieved specific targets and luxury, special experiences are a strong feature to really make the incentive feel like a prize that was worth winning.

Many organisations use these to motivate and reward staff and so these may be organised for small groups or even individuals and are often managed through a travel agent or specialised planner.

RANGE OF BUSINESS EVENT BUYERS - CUSTOMER TYPES AND EVENT ATTENDEES

Business event buyers and attendees come from a wide range of business or organisation types. These can be broadly segmented into the following types:

- Corporate (businesses) small and large
- Associations
- Government (national, state, local)

Corporate / businesses

This business event is organised and hosted by individual companies or organisations. It may be a departmental meeting, a board meeting, showcasing a new product to buyers or working with their own teams to improve processes or motivate sales or similar.

Local businesses hosting one or a range of this type of event can be a valuable, and loyal, customer for event venues returning regularly for all or most of their event needs.

Working with local business groups to host or get involved in business events can be professionally valuable for organisations and individuals.

Attendees to this type of event tend to work for the local organisation (business) or provide services to them. They may also be their customers or those they hope to do business within the future.

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Associations

These are membership organisations usually within an industry sector or area of interest.

Many local areas have business associations or chamber of commerce/trade that fit neatly into this category; they meet regularly to encourage business to business engagement, to offer training or professional development, to network or inform their members on innovations or special interests.

There are also special interest associations or clubs who, again, meet regularly and can potentially be a loyal and ongoing customer.

Association members attend these events and are an attractive audience for an event supplier insofar as many of them also host events for their own businesses, so this is an opportunity to showcase your own product to possible future buyers.

Government

Government meetings are a significant portion of business events. Local councils may have formal meetings in their own chambers but also host and support many business events that bring the local business community together.

State and federal government departments regularly use events as a delivery mechanism for government policy or to drive understanding of policy, to gather information or opinion of policy and to inform industry groups and individuals. It is also common for government departments to host conferences and seminars and these often include hosting in regional communities. Busy industry sectors in each region are often supported or informed by government department policies and seeking the department relevant to your local industry is a good way to engage with this sector.

Attendees come from the relevant industry sector, businesses in the area or sometimes individuals who have a particular interest in department's work or industry area.

Other important buyers and advocates

Who books and organises business events for these customer groups? It may be a member of the team or the organisation may use an external event manager. It is important to build a good working relationship with the primary organiser as this is the person you will liaise with in planning the event, determining what services you can supply and ensuring the event runs smoothly when that time comes.

The Executive Assistant: this team member may be someone working for a senior manager or director who manages events for the company alongside other duties. These people often have a lot of event related experience and expertise as they may have been organising this event for many years or regularly manage events, but for many it's only a small part of the job and they may appreciate assistance from venues and suppliers to ensure the event runs well and meets the organisation's objectives.

Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) or Event Managers are people with event management experience and skills who work for organisations who specialise in event management. The range of jobs that a PCO will do for the event include:

- Finding suitable event venues and services for the event
- Marketing and promotion
- Programming the content and timings of the event which may include finding suitable speakers or facilitators
- Managing the administration around the event
- Registering attendees and, on the day, helping to coordinate this and meet and greet those attending
- Liaising with the venue and all other services to ensure the event runs smoothly
- Managing the budget and accepting and processing invoices, and sometimes payments, for the customer/organisation they are working for
- Event evaluation and customer satisfaction.

PCOs run events for a range of customers and so bring a lot of expertise and experience, often across multiple event types. They will be a strong advocate for their customer's needs and an excellent support to any venue or supplier to ensure the event is a success.

A word about commission payments – some PCOs may expect a commission from the venue or other service provider. Commission rates vary depending on the organisation and the size or complexity of the event so it is worth asking whether the PCO expects a commission when you are speaking with them and before you send your proposal or quotation.

RESOURCES FOR FINDING EVENT BUYERS:


- Business Events Victoria <https://businesseventsvictoria.com/>
- Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) <https://www.meetingsevents.com.au/>
- PCO Association (PCOA) <https://pco.asn.au>
- Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) <https://abea.org.au/>
- Associations Forum <https://associations.net.au/>
- Executive Assistants (EA) are often in-house event planners for an organisation . EA membership groups include Executive PA Media <https://executivepa.com/> and Melbourne EA Group (MEAG) <https://www.melbourneeagroup.com/>

We will find out more about marketing to these different event buyers and attendees in the toolkit **Business Events Marketing Guidelines**.

MEET IN REGIONAL VICTORIA.

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