

# BUSINESS EVENTS BASICS

## GETTING READY TO HOST A BUSINESS EVENT



**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

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**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**



# TABLE OF CONTENT

Page  
1

## ROOM REQUIREMENTS

- Basic requirements for a business events space
- Safety considerations
- Capacity guidelines
- Room layouts
  - Theatre style
  - Cabaret style
  - Boardroom style
  - U-shape style
  - Hollow square style
  - Classroom style
  - Banquet style
  - Cocktail style

## AUDIO VISUAL REQUIREMENTS

12

- Audio requirements
- Visual requirements
- Frequently-asked questions about AV
- General advice

## ACCESSIBILITY, SIGNAGE AND GUEST EXPERIENCE

16

- Getting to the venue
- Accessibility for those with impairments
- Making space more accessible
- Suitable signage

## CATERING

21

- Understanding the attendee
- Dining experience for business events

## PROFESSIONALISM AND CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

25

- Touchpoints of customer service for business events
- Critical service elements

## ROOM REQUIREMENTS

### Basic requirements for a business events space

A room suitable for a business event needs similar facilities and amenities to those for any other type of event plus some additional services to ensure the objective of the event can be achieved. Just as with all other events, the business event space will need:

- **Sufficient floor space** – so attendees don't feel cramped and enough space to accommodate different room layouts (see below) as these will differ from event to event
- **Room shape** that allows everyone to see the presenter and each other
- **No pillars** – or if pillars exist, they should not impede people being able to see and participate
- **Space for presenter**, whether via a raised platform, lectern or table

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*Natural light or windows help attendee stay focused*

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- **Clean and well decorated** – light bounces off light walls and helps keep the energy levels up, whereas very dark walls can cocoon the attendees which leads to inattention, especially in the later stages of the day
- **Good ceiling height** – low ceilings can make rooms feel cramped, claustrophobic and oppressive which is not helpful if attendees are spending several hours in the space
- **Good lighting** – people will need to be able to work on activities or take notes so good lighting that allows this to occur is important. Fluorescent lighting can be challenging as the lighting is often harsh to sit under for a long period of time. Energy saving LED lights are more suitable and also meet business events sustainability expectations

- **Heating and cooling** – setting a good ambient temperature keeps everyone awake so having the temperature controllable by the facilitator is useful
- **Windows or natural light** – is highly regarded; letting light and fresh air into the room also helps people stay focused on the event
- **Additional power sockets** – these days most attendees will come with a laptop to make notes and will need to charge this and their mobile phone, so a room with some spare power sockets to let this happen is useful
- **Extra space** – a little extra room for coffee breaks may be useful if there is no other facility for this; it also helps foster conversations and networking away from the work space and can be used for catering in the room (if required)
- **WI-FI connectivity** – presenters regularly use online materials and most attendees like to stay connected to the outside world
- **Water station** – just outside or in an area of the room if not on any tables being used so everyone can stay hydrated.

### Safety Considerations

Ensure that the room layout is safe for the number of participants using it and that numbers meet fire, safety and any other regulations and that it can be evacuated quickly in case of an emergency. This means being careful of the placement of tables and chairs to maintain clear access to fire escapes and other exits. The layout should not result in impeded walkways or difficulty in accessing exits, refuge points, muster points and emergency assembly points.

Any cabling connecting laptops to projectors etc must be taped down to avoid tripping hazards. It may be worth investing in rubber cable protectors if equipment cables are likely to be visible and be a potential risk.

### Capacity Guidelines

There are a number of online capacity guidelines including <https://www.cvent.com/en/supplier-network/finding-meeting-and-event-space> This gives guidelines only as each space may have additional fixtures, pillars, windows or unmoveable objects that impact on the number of people who can safely and comfortably use the space.

Some examples of approximate size required per person:

- Theatre style – 0.5 square metres per person
- Classroom layout – 1.5 square metres per person
- Banquet seating – 1.5 to 2 square metres per person
- Cocktail reception (guests standing) 1 square metre per person

Source: [www.eventplanner.net](http://www.eventplanner.net)

### Room Layouts

When determining the room layout it is important to take into consideration the position of any projector and screen so the configuration can be built around this. Most event buyers will have a strong preference for a particular room layout as they will have decided which of the many options allows them to meet the needs of the speakers and attendees and the overall objective of the event. The following explains the common room layouts for business events. [See Room Layouts and Capacity - A guide](#)

### Theatre Style



Photo Source : Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel

Theatre style is when chairs are laid out in rows, such as the seating in a theatre. This set-up is the one with the highest capacity within a function room. It is used for functions which require all attendees to be in the same room at the same time which is usually called a plenary session. Theatre style works well when attendees are not required to interact with each other, eg: when listening to a speaker or a lecture style presentation. Theatre style is also commonly used for functions such as AGMs, entertainment and wedding ceremonies and many more.

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*Theatre-style seating works well for a speaker or lecture-style presentation*

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Considerations for this set-up are:

- Incorporation of aisles between sections of chairs so attendees can easily enter and exit without disrupting the entire row
- Rows can be straight, semi-circular or herringbone shape
- Sufficient space in-between rows to accommodate all attendees
- Space permitting, it is best to offset each row so attendees are not sitting directly behind one another which helps people see, though this can be difficult to achieve
- Accessible area for attendees using wheelchairs
- Stage at the front for presenter who should, ideally, be at a slightly raised height to let everyone see them
- Clear sightlines are required.

### Cabaret Style (sometimes called open rounds)



Photo Source : Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel

This set up has small tables (sometimes round but not necessarily) with seats placed around part, but not all of the table. The portion facing the speaker is left 'open' (ie: no chairs). This is popular when you want the attendees to both see the stage and speaker but also to be able to interact with each other for sharing ideas, networking , etc.

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*Cabaret set-up allows attendees to see the speaker and interact with each other.*

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Considerations for this set-up are:

- Sufficient space is needed between the tables for people to easily enter and exit without disrupting the event
- Tables can be laid out in rows or staggered, the latter often helps everyone see and focus on the speaker
- Sufficient space in-between tables for people to push their seat back a little from the table for comfort without impeding others
- Some of the table is 'wasted' as you have less chairs at the table than it takes, so this should be noted when working out how many people the room can take for this layout
- Clear sightlines are required.

## Boardroom Style



Photo Source : Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel

Boardroom style is when attendees sit around a table, such as in an office boardroom space. This is suitable for meetings where you have a limited number of attendees and you want them to be able to see each other and engage in face to face discussions. This is a collaborative meeting set up as everyone interacts and the person “chairing” the meeting can sit anywhere.

Considerations for this set-up are:

- It is often used for training seminars/sessions and small group meetings
- It is very suitable for smaller groups (up to 20) but does not work so well for larger groups as people can't then interact with everyone
- Traditionally consists of one long table or a number of oblong tables pushed together
- It takes up quite a lot of space in a room and is less flexible than other layouts
- This can be used when a stage is not required.

### U-Shape Style



Photo Source : Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel

This is a range of tables arranged in a 'u' with one end table removed to accommodate a facilitator, allowing everyone to see that person and any presentation they have. Traditionally attendees sit on the outside edge of the 'u' only to let this happen.

Considerations for this set up are:

- Very suitable for seminars where you want everyone to see each other and engage in face to face discussions but also interact with the presenter
- Often used for training seminars/sessions where the facilitator wants to enter the 'u' to engage with participants as well as allow them to engage with, and see, each other
- Can work well for small group meetings led by a facilitator
- Very suitable for smaller groups (up to 20) but does not work so well for larger groups as people can't then interact with everyone
- A stage is not required.

### Hollow Square



Photo Source : Federation University, Gippsland Campus

The Hollow square set-up is similar to a U-Shape set-up with the end of the 'U' closed in to form a square and, therefore an open space in the middle.

Considerations for this set up are:

- Similar U-Shape considerations will apply for this layout except that the presenter will only be able to walk around the outer side of the square and some attendees will have their back to the presentation if one is taking place
- To allow for discussion, recommend this works for a maximum of 30 people. You often see this configuration for international political meetings
- This is a good alternative to a Boardroom style set-up for a meeting as it provides attendees more space
- Traditionally consists of oblong tables pushed together in square format
- This can be used when a stage is not required.

## Classroom



Photo Source : Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel

As it sounds, this layout replicates the traditional classroom with attendees sat at (usually oblong) rows of tables with chairs on one side; all participants face the stage or speaker at the front.

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*Classroom set-up is useful for training sessions with laptops.*

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Considerations for this set up are:

- This layout tends to be used for training sessions where content is being delivered but less interaction between participants is needed
- It is useful if attendees are expected to take a lot of notes and perhaps use their laptops to do this
- Seating should not be set where the legs of each table are located
- Aisles should be incorporated for large audiences
- Table rows may be on an angle for large audiences to ensure good sight lines for all attendees
- This can be used when a stage is not required.

## Banquet style



Photo Source : Red Energy Arena

This set up is popular for breakfasts, lunches or dinners. It traditionally consists of round tables of eight or ten and can include a dance floor component if desired. In latest trends, long trestle tables and oval tables have been used in lieu of round tables.

Considerations for this set up are:

- Having the seating all the way around tables works when attendees are only talking with others on the same table
- It is more difficult for attendees to interact with other tables
- It can mean that some people have to move or turn their chairs to see any speeches, presentations or activities on the stage or at the front of the room
- Layout should leave sufficient space for both attendees and any food and beverage staff to access their tables
- A stage may be required for speakers or entertainers.

### Cocktail



Photo Source : Waurn Ponds Estate

A cocktail reception set-up will traditionally be used for functions with a maximum duration of two hours because this requires attendees to remain standing. There may be some seating options around the room along with scattered high cocktail tables where people can place drinks or food. Beverage and canape or light food options are often taken round by waiting staff (sometimes called butlered service as they are acting like Butlers).

Considerations for this set up are:

- Ideal for promotional events and welcome receptions at a conferences
- Can allow short speeches and facilitates any objective of encouraging networking
- This set-up is also used for guests gathering within a lobby area prior to entering a function
- Tray service by waiting staff of canapé style food and beverages may be served, in which case sufficient room size is needed to allow the servers to get to the attendees
- This is also a good set-up for functions where products are displayed and attendees are encouraged to walk around and view the products, such as an exhibition as part of a business event
- Waiting staff serving food should ideally have various entry points to the room ensuring that all attendees have equal amount of food
- Having high cocktail tables scattered around the room will allow attendees to set items on them, especially at functions where more substantial finger food is served
- For outdoor cocktail reception style events, temporary flooring may be required should a grassed area not be useable due to inclement weather
- Shade should also be considered for outdoor events using this set-up style
- A stage may be required for any speakers or they won't easily be seen.

# AUDIO VISUAL REQUIREMENTS

Audio-visual, usually called AV, is a key component of any business event. Attendees need to be able to see and hear the information that is being presented and to do this usually requires some technical support.

AV components are sound, visuals and lighting. Basic AV for events includes the first two (sound and visuals) but the third element (lighting) can be used effectively for decoration and emphasis and is often incorporated into functions and the social aspects of a business event.

In all business events, there is likely to be some technical, audio-visual requirement such as presentation equipment, ie: projectors and screens and sound equipment, ie: microphones. Access to the internet, eg: via WI-FI, is also a common need as many presentations include links to video via the internet. It is also common for attendees to need to check work emails and, sometimes, for event organisers to include online information via Apps or similar. This is popular as it avoids excess printing and encourages online participation via questions to the speaker and allows for immediate feedback online as well as allowing social media posting during the event.

Event buyers will expect some AV to be available. This does not mean you need to provide it yourself and you may find it more viable to partner with a local organisation who can supply it for you when required (on a hire basis), or at the very least, provide recommendations where the client can source this equipment.

## Audio requirements

Attendees need to be able to see and hear the speaker and, if there are questions to the speaker, a roving microphone will be needed so both the speaker and the audience can hear the question and the answer. Keep in mind that when a number of people get together in a room, the sound of their voices can impact on others hearing the presentation or speaker. People tend not to sit silently when attending a business event so even if the room has good acoustics, some technical sound is likely to be required.

Basic audio includes:

- **Lectern microphones** – which are usually fixed to a presentation reading stand (lectern). Using these successfully means the speaker is relatively static and remains behind the lectern and this works well for Masters of Ceremony (MC) or hosts

- **Lapel microphones** – these are a portable and wireless and quite small. The presenter wears a small powerpack and the microphone is pinned to their lapel or top. These are very useful for presenters who like to move around while presenting or need to use their hands
- **Handheld microphones** are the ones you hold in your hand and are useful if the attending audience may have questions. This portable, or 'roving' microphone can be passed to the questioner to ensure everyone (including the speaker) hears what is being asked. These can also be used if there is a panel, with a microphone passed from panellist to panellist.

Many of these basic products can be acquired for a reasonable price. They do not require a high level of technical skill to manage or use and are perfect for most events.

### Visual requirements

Just as the event audience need to be able to hear the speaker/facilitator and any questions from an audience, they also need to be able to see and understand any presentations or imagery used. This means ensuring that the room layout does not impede this and infrastructure such as pillars are taken into account when setting the seating. At cocktail or functions where guests are standing the screens should be at a suitable height so everyone can see any presentation whether they are standing at the front, the sides or the back of the room.

Basic visual needs include:

- **Projector** – these can be fixed into the room (usually from the ceiling) but that does mean that screens (see below) are also placed in one spot and are not easily moved. Alternatively projector units can be placed on a suitable table near the presenter and in front of the screen
- **Screen** – a portable screen has most flexibility than one fixed to a wall. Wall mounted screens have the benefit of remaining still, ie: not wobble, and cannot be easily knocked
- **Laptop** – many event buyers will bring their own but it can be useful to have an in-house one in case there is a compatibility problem between the client's laptop and the venue's equipment
- **Spare cables** – that can attach your equipment to a range of different laptop types, ie: MAC and others.

That is the basic equipment needed.

Other items that can be requested but are less commonplace for most events:

- **TV screen** – which can be used for presentation projection without the need for a projector. TV screens with this functionality usually use an HDMI cable running from the laptop to the TV. If the TV has a USB port, then the presentation can be played directly from a USB (subject to it being in a suitable format)
- **Clicker** – which allows a presenter to move the presentation on from a distance rather than standing at the laptop
- **Smartboards** – are an interactive whiteboard that allows both writing and presentation display and is usually sensitive to touch so the speaker can move things around the board literally by hand
- **Headset** – these are worn around the head; however, this equipment is rapidly going out of fashion as they can be challenging to keep in place and many presenters feel uncomfortable wearing them.

Other popular items include:

- **Whiteboards** – these are not technical pieces of equipment but simply a wipeable board with a white surface where the speaker can write points for emphasis; these are popular in training type events
- **Flipchart** with (usually) A1 paper that the speaker can write on for emphasis or use to ask the attendees to write thoughts or comments regarding the session; this is common in training orientated business events
- **Whiteboard marker** pens that can be used on both whiteboards and flipcharts
- **Draping** – this hides the wall behind the speaker, which can be useful to avoid distractions from a wall etc
- **Lighting** – additional lighting for stages etc may be requested for gala functions or to introduce the speaker but tends to only be used for larger, complex events. For example: a "wash" is a general "fill" of light and colour across the stage which softens the stage. A warm colour wash helps the skin tone of speakers. However, this can be challenging if the speakers are moving around a lot. This is one where a technical assistant with knowledge will be needed.

### Frequently asked questions about AV

**Q: Our meeting room has a capacity of 100 people; how many roving microphones do I need?**

**A:** *One would work but if you can stretch to two that would be helpful as it saves people having to wait for the microphone to ask their question and therefore keeps the session flowing.*

**Q: If you are using 2 screens in the one room, how many projectors would you require?**

**A:** *Two, one per screen.*

**Q: I have 30 people attending a meeting. The set-up is U-Shape with a top Panel-Table for 3 speakers. Do I need microphones?**

**A:** *Yes, it would be best to use microphones. Recommend 1 for the speakers (panellists) which can be passed between them. Given the small size of the audience and the U-Shape, you could get away without having a microphone for questions but the facilitation will need people to speak clearly and slightly raise their voice.*

**Q: I have more than one meeting room; do I need AV for each room or can it be shared between them?**

**A:** *If you are likely to book both rooms at the same time, you will need AV for each room.*

### General Advice

Purchase, or source a reputable supplier who can supply a projector and screen and one roving and one lapel microphone. As most event managers will bring their own laptop and associated equipment, this would suffice for most events. A whiteboard or flipchart would be a useful addition too if feasible.

## ACCESSIBILITY, SIGNAGE AND GUEST EXPERIENCE



### Getting to the venue

Getting people to your space or venue safely and efficiently is very important. If you are near to public transport, it is worthwhile promoting this on your website etc.

Business event key contact (the buyer) will likely need to park a car as they will be

transporting equipment and having suitable car parking options is essential for them and helpful to the attendees. This may also include areas where cars, taxis and coaches can set down passengers and these should be as close as possible to the entrance. If you don't have your own parking, provide guidance on the most suitable options for those attending events. Consider working with a neighbouring business to allow parking for those actually running the event who may need their car close by.

### Accessibility for those with impairments

There are many reasons why you should think about accessibility and how you plan to meet the requirements of people with who may need support to access the event space due to a current or permanent disability.

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*Prioritise accessibility and plan how you can meet the requirements of people with impairments.*

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Not least of all:

- There are around four million people with disabilities in Australia representing a considerable proportion of your potential audience or customers
- People with disabilities can also influence the choices of their colleagues, families and friends if they have had a previous bad experience
- Everyone benefits when access is better, including other attendees, people making deliveries, people with heavy baggage, and more generally families with young children, those with prams and those who find themselves with injuries where access normally would not be an issue

- Our population is ageing and as we age our capacities change. More and more of us will benefit from good access to the events we want to participate in
- Under the law you have a legal responsibility to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities and complaints of discrimination could result in costly court proceedings and rulings
- If the needs of potential participants in an event are taken into account at the earliest planning stages the better the chances are of making it genuinely accessible and significantly reducing the potential for future problems
- Consideration should be given to access to venues by public transport, parking areas, ramps, drop off points and the positioning of lifts
- Anti-slip metal strips outside venues are useful, for everyone especially in inclement weather
- Suitable car parking spaces near to the main entrance and options for pick up / drop off for those using taxis or other public transport including lowered kerbs.

### **Making space more accessible**

On 1 May 2011 a set of access requirements were introduced in Australia called the Disability (Access to Premises – buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards). This means that all new buildings, and those parts of existing buildings undergoing upgrade or modification, will have to provide significantly better access than was required under previous building laws. In some situations there is also a requirement to upgrade the path of travel from the principal pedestrian entrance of an existing building to the area where upgrades or modifications are taking place.

Some things to consider to enhance accessibility for all people, not just event participants:

- More accessible unisex toilets and toilets designed to meet the needs of people with ambulant disabilities
- Better circulation space around and through doors and potentially wider doorways
- More accessible entrances to buildings
- Better signage and being mindful of the use of colours in signage that may be challenging to read for those with limited vision
- More accessible spaces overall
- Providing access to the upper floor in most 2 and 3 storey buildings (depending on age etc) via lift or similar and making sure that buttons in lifts are at a suitable height for those in a wheelchair

- Interpreting and translating services for those with hearing impairment – this might not be something you are asked for, but it could be useful to research suitably qualified people in your area (see NAATI for help with this <https://www.naati.com.au/>)
- Information desks or receptions are easily accessible for those with a disability, eg: not too high
- Ensuring that staff have undergone some disability awareness training
- Slip resistant surfaces on paths and walkways, inside and out
- Hearing augmentation systems
- Promoting accessible facilities and positive accessibility ethos on your website.

For more information on event accessibility see:

[https://www.meetingsevents.com.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/accessible\\_events\\_guide.pdf](https://www.meetingsevents.com.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/accessible_events_guide.pdf)

### Suitable Signage

This does not have to be hi-tech, but it does need to be visible. Event managers use signage to direct attendees to the event itself and, when on-site, to different areas if relevant. Effective and easy to see and read signage saves time for everyone as attendees can confidently find the relevant room and the event team can attend to other duties rather than give multiple directions.

Events often have signs on walls, doors and even floors, the last one is popular for directional signage in larger buildings. The most popular is probably portable displays such as A-frames that can be updated quickly if needed and moved fast if seemingly poorly positioned in the first place. Some places have electronic signage which works well for directions and can be changed quickly to include client logos, event name and directions.



When planning signage for the event, it is important to:

- Ensure directional signs are big enough to be seen from a distance
- Place all signs in strategic locations, generally at each entrance point to the venue
- Place added 'directional' or 'this way' signs if there is a distance between the entrance and the meeting space as this helps everyone find the room and avoids concern that they have missed it or are lost
- Use contrasting colours so they can be read properly, eg: this can be a simple black background with white text or white background with black text
- Use a large enough text size that it can be easily read from a distance
- Use the company logo of the event client if possible as this will be easily recognised by attendees and can be more 'visible' than simply their name in writing
- If there are number of events on at the same time with different organisations, using logos or the colour scheme of the event is a good way to differentiate between the (possibly competing) signs.

Signage can do more than give directions, it allows you to promote your venue or space with your own signage. If you do this, ensure that the name of the organisation is clear in both outside and inside space and that any logo is predominantly displayed if you have one. Logos should be at the top of any signage in case these end up being positioned behind a table. Pull up banners are a useful way to promote elements of the organisation's offerings or have these in each meeting room to remind attendees of your role in the event.

Other signage may be needed to help attendees find their way around the event, eg:

- Restrooms
- Entrance/welcome
- Food and drink
- Registration areas
- Informational kiosks/customer service
- Break-out session rooms if using a range of spaces
- Exit/thank you for attending
- Electronic charging stations if used

Event elements that are often signed or used as signage include:

- **Lecterns** – with the name of the venue or event so when attendees look at the stage or speaker this is what they see
- **Barriers** – directional barriers that funnel attendees into key areas can be signed with event and/or venue name, logo etc for added promotion or branding
- **The stairs** – stair wraps put information on the vertical rise
- **Natural landscape** – signs placed amongst the planting or on poles
- **Furniture** – using branded chair covers
- **Banners** – overhead banners and pull-up banners are very common ways to promote
- **Gobo projections** – a gobo is a customizable stencil you can place inside or in front of a light source that changes the shape of the emitted light. It's easy to put in effect and can come in handy if you're in a venue with restrictions on decorations. Alternatively, projection signage is a digital version of gobos, but are best used against large, plain walls or surfaces (like the floor or tables). This one will need some technical support
- **Balloons** – with relevant logo or message. However, balloons are not environmentally friendly so are less popular than they once were
- **A-frames** including handwritten 'easel' type which add a personalised touch if this matches the event style.

# CATERING

“Food, glorious food” is often a discussion point when planning an event. Venues are pleased to showcase their skills in catering for a range of meal types and needs and event planners want to ensure that nobody goes hungry. For some events, the event catering is a key component in the experience that the attendees have, and even when the catering is far from the primary reason for attending, everyone is always interested in what is being served.



In modern times, attendees are often more health conscious and prefer to avoid heavy or fattening foods so offering perceived healthy options is popular. We do need to balance this with providing sufficient fuel to keep everyone awake and energised, but not so much they are asleep after lunch.

Alcohol is not normally served during the working day.

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*Take time to understand the catering requirements of an event.  
Be flexible and be prepared with options.*

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## Understanding the attendee

Most event organisers will have a budget for catering and a clear idea of what type of food will suit their guests. It is very useful to ask questions to find out who the attendees are, eg: demographic information relating to age and gender as different groups do tend to have different food preferences. It is a generalisation, but still quite true, that men tend to eat more than women and that women prefer what may be termed healthier choices. Food choices should therefore reflect the attendee profile and, usually, err on the side of light and healthy. Event buyers can also describe food that worked well at their previous events, and that which was less successful and may use these experiences to decide on menus.

Being flexible with food offerings and customising these for business events will be expected.

### Dining experiences for business events

A day-long event would expect to serve morning and afternoon tea and a lunch. For business events, meal breaks are also networking opportunities so food choices and service needs to understand and facilitate that. For example: it is usual for the teas to be served standing so that attendees can network with each other and visit any exhibition; if there is an exhibition it is commonplace to serve teas in that space to encourage interactions between exhibitors and attendees. Events include post event networking over drinks and light snacks or canapes and for longer conferences there may be a dinner option where wine and other alcohol is served.

Vegetarian food is growing in popularity, even for non-vegetarians, as it's often lighter and many people do not want to eat meat every day. Fish can be popular, as can dishes from a range of cultures as both are often lighter and perceived to be healthier.

Dietary requirements are commonplace and growing in complexity. This can be challenging for a venue to manage, especially within short meal timeframes and sometimes within budget. The event planner will ask attendees about dietary options in advance and provide these to a venue. Offering vegetarian options and a range of gluten free items as a standard meal choice during the menu selection stage helps to alleviate the additional work of managing dietary requests as well as meeting the needs of a growing health-conscious business event attendees.

It is unlikely that the standard fare from any restaurant area will suffice for the business event, so venues need to consider what they are able to provide easily and that can be served within the designated timeframe; late meal service puts the whole event timing off and may mean attendees have to leave before the end.

Service is usually buffet style, with some assistance to serve food items if needed. Completely self-service from service areas is common and acceptable.

Event buyers appreciate the options to customise or tailor food items to suit the event and the attendees. It is useful to have sample menus to show to tempt them and give some inspiration as to what you are able to provide; these should not be too rigid as they may not meet the needs of everyone.

**Morning / Afternoon tea** - most business events would allow 30 minutes for this, or sometimes a little shorter if the group is small. Therefore food and beverage choices offered must be able to be served and eaten in that timeframe. Popular items for this meal break are:

- Fruit which is appreciated though people tend to eat more from a fruit platter than single items from a fruit bowl
- Savoury and/or sweet items such as pastries and muffins, but these need to be small bite sized
- Other healthy options that avoid too much processed sugar
- Items that are easy to eat and manage when standing with a cup of something hot in the other hand
- A range of teas including herbal
- Coffee – a barista service is not required, though sometimes this is an add on that event planners organise for attendees at an additional cost (to the conference budget overall)
- Water available throughout
- Fruit juice
- Lighter and less items can be served in the afternoon if the attendees have had lunch as they are unlikely to be very hungry.

**Lunch** – a 40-to-45-minute lunch is also common as it's understood that, as well as eat, many attendees may need to check work email or deal with telephone messages in the middle of the event. It is not common to serve alcohol during the business day and many organisations do not permit this. Lunches may also be stand up to allow networking or with a range of tables where attendees once they have served themselves but having tables available where people can select from the buffet and sit down is a good idea, as generally people do want to sit to eat some lunch.

Traditional sit-down lunch is unusual but may suit some events.

Popular items for this meal break are:

- A choice of items offered via a buffet (some service or self-service)
- Lighter sandwiches might be offered but ensure white, wholemeal, brown bread options. These are less popular with some groups as bread and other carbohydrates do not appeal to those aiming for healthy eating
  - This definitely depends on the demographic attending (eg: who is in the audience) so should be discussed with the event planner/client

- Buffets work well as it allows for a range of options that are more likely to suit more people than simply offering one choice
- Vegetarian food is useful as it's lighter, growing in popularity and also allows you to manage those type of dietaries without any additional work
- Try to incorporate modern and popular food choices as these will mirror what the attendees are likely to be eating elsewhere
- Choose items that don't all need to be served hot as it can be difficult to keep everything warm
- A range of teas including herbal
- Coffee – a barista service is not required, though sometimes this is an add on that event planners organise for attendees at an additional cost (to the conference budget overall)
- Water available throughout
- Fruit juice
- Lighter food items are preferred over heavy items
- Some sweet and savoury items are appreciated though sweet can be fruit only
- Most people no longer eat a heavy or large lunch

Bear in mind that attendees will appreciate different choices throughout the day to tempt the palate as well as keep the fuelled, refreshed and awake.

Some tips for great event food

- Organic, healthy food and locavore options — foods made with local, seasonal ingredients — are always appreciated
- Try new things from other cultures, checking first that this will suit the event needs
- Make the food choices a showcase of your organisational skills, not just a fuel stop
- Remember that attendees may be standing and eating with one hand and networking, so ensure the food is also easy to eat with a fork or one handed
- Avoid food that is needs lots of cutting up, is very messy and likely to be difficult to eat daintily so these items will usually be ignored, which is disappointing for the chef and the client and unsustainable
- Choose fresh, visually appealing dishes that reflect your venue and the region so that the food at the business event helps promote a sense of place and the region. Attendees want to know they are somewhere different and food is a great way to show them that.

## PROFESSIONALISM AND CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Businesses know that offering a professional and customer centric experience is likely to be financially rewarding due to repeat business, recommendations and impacting positively on the time it takes to service the booking/business.

An event manager or client will expect:

- Responsive service
- Evidence that you are interested in your mutual customer (end user/attendee)
- A collaborative, team approach – they want to feel part of your team and vice versa
- Your professionalism to match theirs
- Contract reflecting any Covid or relevant 'norms'

The event attendee will expect:

- A memorable experience
- Venue/accommodation fit for purpose
- Customer centric service – a welcome that makes them feel that they are not just a number
- New experiences
- Warmth, friendliness from all they interact with
- Covid safe

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*Offering a professional and customer centric experience will likely lead to repeat business and word of mouth recommendations.*

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## Touchpoints of customer service for business events

The touchpoints are every point where the client (and the attendee) comes into contact with your organisation. This means before, during and after the event. Touchpoints are dependent on the business but can include:

<p>Pre-purchase/attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your website or online presence</li> <li>• Marketing/advertising messages and materials</li> <li>• Attentiveness and responsiveness to enquiries and questions</li> <li>• Ease of confirmation and booking of space and services</li> <li>• Communication between you and the client</li> <li>• Payment process, deposits etc</li> </ul>
<p>While at the event or planning it with you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range and flexibility of the product or service</li> <li>• Ease of contact with relevant team members</li> <li>• Performance of the team</li> <li>• Accessibility to the venue and booked space</li> <li>• The quality of what is being offered</li> <li>• All purchased services meeting expectation (eg: room, food, AV)</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Level of personalised and interested customer care and attention received by both client and the attendees – eg: all team members are aware of the event and interact professionally and in a friendly manner</li> </ul>
<p>After the event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency and accuracy of invoicing and billing</li> <li>• Follow up to check satisfaction</li> <li>• Feedback sought or accepted</li> </ul>

### Customer Service - Critical service elements

These can be separated into tangible and intangible.

The tangible elements are that the AV equipment works and someone onsite can assist or understands how to make this happen. This will include meeting space that is fit for purpose in a venue that is clean and in good condition. It will include interesting and delicious food that suits the location and celebrates local produce.

The intangible elements will include team members with an engaged attitude who show an interest in the event and, when the event is onsite, know and care that it is there. This includes an expectation of flexibility rather than trying to fit the buyers' requirements into what is easier for the venue or other host organisation and importantly, a responsive and 'can do' attitude is needed from all who interact with both the client and the attendees.


## SUMMARY OF TEMPLATE AND SAMPLE

[Room Layouts and Capacity – A Guide](#)

# MEET IN REGIONAL VICTORIA.

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EVENTS  
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