



HCA & The Global Association Meetings Protocol

City: Edmonton

Global Associations Meeting Protocol - 4 Pillars (Source: ICCA Global Association Meetings Protocol)

These provide a structured framework for destination leaders to optimize how they work with association clients in the future.

Sustainability, Equity & Legacy

Association clients are facing increasing pressure from their organizations and partners to be more transparent about how they're collaborating with host destinations to decrease environmental impacts and increase benefits to a wider breadth of community members and stakeholders.

Sustainability; equity, diversity and inclusion; and legacy are now top of mind for association clients when it comes to site selection. Therefore, destinations should dedicate more resources to deliver on those priorities more effectively. Some specific strategies here are:

- Work closely with associations to help them achieve their legacy objectives.
- Balance the need for growth with responsible and sustainable development.
- Develop a sustainable tourism and events strategic framework.
- Improve equity, diversity and inclusion across organization staff
- Protect and steward the natural environment and our authentic social and cultural characteristics
- Elevate the destination brand by promoting progressive people and organizations invested in sustainability and equality.
- Develop new KPIs to better measure the economic and social impact of tourism and business events beyond visitor volume.
- Increase collaboration with local community organizations to address social issues

Crisis Planning & Mitigation

Protocols to enhance safety, health and security should be further enhanced and codified to protect against future cataclysmic shocks and chronic stresses that impact business events. Some specific strategies here are:

- Pay close attention to safety, health and security as a strategic consideration in our future planning.
- Develop a much more comprehensive crisis management strategy with new protocols related to all types of crises.
- Expand networks and collaboration with health, safety and security organizations to improve the destination's resilience to future shocks.
- Increase direct involvement in risk assessment and mitigation strategies for business events.
- Engage in scenario planning to help be prepared for future disruptions and opportunities

Advocacy & Policy

Association clients are asking destinations and their partners to continue to advocate stridently for reducing barriers to travel. Some specific strategies here are:

- Increase advocacy efforts regarding border trade and travel restrictions.

- Actively encourage policy makers to reduce barriers to travel.
- Diversify revenue sources to maintain and expand current funding levels.
- Play more of a central role in advocacy in the destination.

Sector & Community Alignment

Providing access to local clusters of advanced industries and community leaders is critical for attracting business events in those industries. Selling brainpower as well as buildings improves competitiveness for the destination and enhances legacy outcomes for the client. Some specific strategy here is:

- Expand engagement with universities, research institutions and advanced/ creative industries to better attract high-value business events.
- Develop outreach programs in the local community to broaden industry networks.
- Place greater emphasis on connecting business event customers with intellectual capabilities and knowledge networks in their destination.
- Enhance engagement with local community to manage future considerations for the visitor economy.

How is the city of Edmonton aligning with the Global Meetings Protocol?

Sustainability, Equity & Legacy

Sustainability; equity, diversity and inclusion; and legacy are now top of mind for association clients when it comes to site selection. Therefore, destinations should dedicate more resources to deliver on those priorities more effectively.

1. At present is your *city/ CVB/ destination partners* implementing any of the following sustainability, equity & legacy strategies?
 - Work closely with associations to help them achieve their legacy objectives.
 - Balance the need for growth with responsible and sustainable development.
 - Develop a sustainable tourism and events strategic framework.
 - Improve equity, diversity and inclusion across organization staff
 - Protect and steward the natural environment and our authentic social and cultural characteristics
 - Elevate the destination brand by promoting progressive people and organizations invested in sustainability and equality.
 - Develop new KPIs to better measure the economic and social impact of tourism and business events beyond visitor volume.
 - Increase collaboration with local community organizations to address social issues

Yes, we are actively working to implement sustainability, EDI, and legacy frameworks within our organization throughout several departments.

2. Can you describe an initiative taking place in your *city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city* that demonstrates one of the above strategies?

Our duty as public stewards and contributors to the continued development of Edmonton helps guide our decision-making to ensure Explore Edmonton gives back to our community wherever and whenever possible. The Responsible Events Program is just one way for us to achieve this as a Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO).

The Responsible Events Program is the first phase of a long-term event legacy strategy. This first phase includes the launch of a 'menu' of community and environmental benefit activities that event planners can select to give-back to the community and environment. Explore Edmonton facilitates this program by connecting event planners with partners to collaborate on outcomes that the event planner, partner, and Explore Edmonton see as mutually beneficial. The next phase will see Explore Edmonton uncover local needs and gaps in social and economic development and make this visible to those attracting events to the city. Explore Edmonton will then identify event planners and partners who wish to collaborate on more expansive legacy projects. These will lead to longer-term impacts, which will be managed, amplified, measured, and reported on. This second phase will begin in 2023 with the launch of two event legacy pilot programs.

Explore Edmonton aims to become the permanent entity in developing legacy events that create a broader impact. Our ultimate goal is to report on and celebrate the societal impact that these organizations will have on Explore Edmonton's ecosystem. Through this, business events (as well as education, sports, and cultural events) will become more aligned with the priorities already pursued by the city government and economic development actors and will be recognized as strategic drivers of development. They will also gain better support from the non-event community and will positively contribute to Edmonton's urban well-being.

3. Is your *city// CVB/ destination partners in your city* undertaking other strategies not listing above that demonstrate its commitment to sustainability, equity and legacy?

Our [Carbon Neutral Events](#) program is another piece of the sustainable tourism and events framework our Sustainability department has established. Every event partner who is coming into Edmonton is presented with this program and can work with our Emissions Coordinator to make their event carbon neutral or carbon friendly.

Explore Edmonton provides expert support in developing carbon reduction strategies with these events and customized data collection methodologies to establish a baseline. Then, through our carbon offset partnership, we connect planners with carbon offset projects to achieve carbon neutrality.

In 2020, Explore Edmonton also established an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Council which is integrated across the entire organization to advise on EDI matters.

Perhaps most importantly, Explore Edmonton has established corporate targets and KPIs for corporate GHG emissions, Community Benefit and EDI. These measures are an important piece of how we, and our shareholders, measure our performance and are reported on in our annual report.

Crisis Planning & Mitigation



Protocols to enhance safety, health and security should be further enhanced and codified to protect against future cataclysmic shocks and chronic stresses that impact business events:

1. At present is your *city/ CVB/ destination partners* implementing any of the following crisis planning & mitigation strategies?

- Pay close attention to safety, health and security as a strategic consideration in our future planning.
- Develop a much more comprehensive crisis management strategy with new protocols related to all types of crises.
- Expand networks and collaboration with health, safety and security organizations to improve the destination's resilience to future shocks.
- Increase direct involvement in risk assessment and mitigation strategies for business events.
- Engage in scenario planning to help be prepared for future disruptions and opportunities

Yes, a key example of this is our work to secure and maintain our [GBAC Star Destination Accreditation](#), as detailed below.

2. Can you describe an initiative taking place in your *city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city* that demonstrates one of the above strategies?

Our major convention and event facilities (Edmonton EXPO and Edmonton Convention Centre) remained operational for most of the pandemic, even during the first and most severe waves, because they were activated as emergency response for the pandemic (vaccination clinic, testing centre, and emergency shelter accommodation). This meant we had to introduce new processes and safe work practices quickly and in a relative high-risk setting. Having some direction through the GBAC Star Facility Accreditation was instrumental in helping us to do this at the speed and precision that was required. Because of the novel nature of COVID-19, it was important for us to adopt a framework for infectious disease prevention that came with support from a credible source, like the ISSA. This gave us assurances that we were developing an infectious disease program that was to the highest standard of industry best practices.

The health and safety of every visitor to our destination is of paramount importance. It is the core of our business that our guests feel comfortable, safe and welcome. We knew if we were going to better our chances of a swift return to in-person gatherings, our visitors, clients, and employees needed assurance and confidence in our ability to keep them safe from pathogens and communicable diseases. This included the adoption of new technologies, cleaning equipment, disinfectant chemicals, personal protective equipment, processes for early detection and emergency response. Primarily in our meeting and event facilities but also in our hotel accommodations and transportation partners that have become GBAC Star certified.

The GBAC Star Accreditation involves regular program maintenance which helps us to respond swiftly to frequent changes to the risks or level of risk present in our facility and across our destination. This was particularly important with the emergence of new variants or new viruses. One challenge we did face during the pandemic, as did other facilities, was supply chain shortages. While these issues are often unavoidable, creating a contingency plan for these types of distributions was a positive outcome of working through the GBAC Star Facility Accreditation

requirements. We've also established more effective inventory controls for things like personal protective equipment which has better equipped us in the case of a future outbreak.

When speaking with clients, many of them were not aware of the GBAC Star Facility Accreditation or what that meant. But, now into the second year of reaccreditation, we're finding we are all just more informed and knowledgeable about infectious disease prevention practices in our facility, meaning that we can readily answer client questions about our safety protocols in the building. This is true for the leaders in the business but also, for our front-line employees like janitorial staff and security staff that interact more closely with our visitors.

Now, we're finding that infectious disease risk assessment and response has been intentionally and deeply engrained in our business systems; making it part of the conversation for almost all decision making. Caring for One Another is one of our organizational values at Explore Edmonton; it is deeply engrained into our company purpose and what makes our employees proud to work here. The extension of our Health and Safety program to include infectious disease prevention through GBAC Star is one way we continue to prioritize our people and our guests.

3. Is your *city// CVB/ destination partners in your city* undertaking other strategies not listing above that demonstrate its commitment to crisis planning & mitigation?

In response to the climate emergency, Explore Edmonton is deeply committed to achieving our GHG targets and contributing to a climate resilient Edmonton. We are a Climate Smart Certified Business and have set an ambitious target to reduce corporate emissions by 30% by 2035 (from 2018 levels). Our Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan outlines the efforts that we are taking in both climate mitigation and climate adaptation. Climate change adaptation is especially important as we continue to feel the effects of a changing climate in our city.

Climate Mitigation Measures:

- Energy Efficiency and Renewables (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - Our energy management plan includes preventive maintenance and building control measures that help reduce energy use. By harnessing clean, renewable, solar energy at our venues, we reduce our demand for procured energy.
- Carbon Offsetting (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - The Responsible Event Program allows events to go carbon neutral through the calculation of their own carbon footprint and the ability to invest in reforestation programs for continual generation of carbon credits.
- Efficient Transportation (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - We advocate for more efficient transportation to and from our venues during events and business travel. Through our implementation of electric vehicle charging stations, free bus tickets for business travel, and the Show Your Badge program, we are tackling the emissions produced through the burning of fossil fuels.
- Waste Reduction (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - Explore Edmonton is taking significant leaps in reducing waste at both venues. Aspiring to go zero waste is one way in which we are aiming to go further with our waste diversion goals.

Climate Adaptation Measures:

- Environmental Monitoring
 - The ECC publicly showcases real-time indoor and outdoor air quality scores to raise awareness around diminishing air quality due to climate change, pollution, and forest fires.
- Urban Agricultural Awareness
 - The Edmonton Urban Farm provides opportunity for active community engagement; to learn about and contribute to local sustainable food resourcing and security. We are increasing our capacity within community-based programming to further build resiliency within our food systems.
- Business Continuity Planning
 - Considering climate resiliency within long-term business planning and vulnerability assessments to allow for proper responses toward emergencies and disasters including preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery.
 - We are evaluating nature-based solutions to accommodate the extremes of the changing climate.

Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Measures:

- Explore Edmonton's GHG Emission Reduction Plan (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - The creation of a carbon footprint and emissions reduction pathway allows for the prioritization and execution of GHG reduction initiatives. Ongoing analyses will provide data-based information that will aid in the development of future adaptation strategies.
- Building Retrofits and Operational Efficiency (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - Our event venues are undergoing deep retrofit work that will result in less resource use through mechanical, structural, and electrical upgrades and a more secure facility infrastructure. Both venues are striving for BOMA BEST certification to ensure we are up to date with the highest industry standards and have effective management plans.
- Sustainable Event Consultations (Direct impact to GHG reduction)
 - The carbon footprint of events directly impacts our organizational carbon footprint. Offering expertise, resources, and toolkits to event planners reduces their GHG emissions and ultimately ours.

Advocacy & Policy

Association clients are asking destinations and their partners to continue to advocate stridently for reducing barriers to travel

1. At present is your *city/ CVB/ destination partners* implementing any of the following advocacy and policy strategies?



- Increase advocacy efforts regarding border trade and travel restrictions.
 - Actively encourage policy makers to reduce barriers to travel.
 - Diversify revenue sources to maintain and expand current funding levels. (multi-year funding agreement with EDMH. PrairiesCan, directly engaged to partner with variety of initiatives)
 - Play more of a central role in advocacy in the destination
2. Can you describe an initiative taking place in your *city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city* that demonstrates one of the above strategies?

We activated Tourism Week with partners to create an advocacy summit which brought hundreds together. We also promoted Tourism Week broadly through media, social media, as well as developed stories with businesses in the sector to speak to the importance of the industry to them.

We worked with a contractor to identify our corporate brand story and language which was foundational in how we present the case for growth in the visitor economy and how we rally the community to promote growth in the tourism sector.

3. Is your *city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city* undertaking other strategies not listing above that demonstrate its commitment to advocacy and policy in reducing barriers to travel?

Sector & Community Alignment

Providing access to local clusters of advanced industries and community leaders is critical for attracting business events in those industries. Selling brainpower as well as buildings improves competitiveness for the destination and enhances legacy outcomes for the client.

1. At present is your *city/ CVB/ destination partners* implementing any of the following sector and community alignment strategies?

- Expand engagement with universities, research institutions and advanced/ creative industries to better attract high-value business events.
- Develop outreach programs in the local community to broaden industry networks.
- Place greater emphasis on connecting business event customers with intellectual capabilities and knowledge networks in their destination.
- Enhance engagement with local community to manage future considerations for the visitor economy.

Yes, we actively work with Edmonton Global, our region's economic development organization, on an industry sector-focused strategy for attracting events, investment, and trade to the region. Part of this work is our Business Events Legacy Council, which is comprised of ambassadors from universities, research institutions, and other industry leaders.

2. Can you describe an initiative taking place in your *city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city* that demonstrates one of the above strategies?

The [Business Events Legacy Council](#) is an intentional framework to actively engage with universities, research institutions, and industry to better and more proactively attract high-value business events to Edmonton. Active discussion with members of the council has not only



allowed us to attract and convert more sector-focused event leads, but it has also allowed us to connect our event partners with local knowledge networks that can enhance their events with sector-focused tours, content, and speakers.

3. Is your city/ / CVB/ destination partners in your city undertaking other strategies not listing above that demonstrate its commitment to sector and community alignment?

Explore Edmonton participates in several educational partnerships including internship programs with Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) Culinary Program, City Centre High School Hospitality Program, and MacEwan University's School of Continuing Education (SCE) Sustainability Program designed. These internship opportunities are designed to help establish career tracks into tourism and hospitality for youth. Our community outreach strategy includes facilitating workshops on destination sustainability for students and industry partners, as well as on-site tours of our facilities for K-12 schools, post-secondary schools and other community organizations.

Join the Alliance

