

BUSINESS EVENTS

**ARE THE
FAST TRACK
TO RECOVERY**

A G3 POSITION PAPER FEBRUARY 2022

BUSINESS EVENT:

Any public or private activity consisting of a minimum of 15 persons with a common interest or vocation, held in a specific venue or venues, and hosted by an organization or organizations.

DEFINITION COURTESY OF THE BUSINESS EVENTS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

THE EIGHT TYPES OF BUSINESS EVENTS

Conferences · Congresses · Conventions · Corporate or Association Events · Exhibitions/Trade Shows · Incentive Gatherings · Meetings/Summits · Product Launches

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BUSINESS EVENTS ARE THE FAST TRACK TO RECOVERY

Business Events are needed now more than ever for one essential reason: to propel commerce past the Covid-19 crisis and put economies and societies on a fast track towards recovery.

FAST TRACK:

A route or method which provides for more rapid results than usual.

OXFORD LANGUAGES DICTIONARY

G3 =

International Association of Convention Centres | AIPC
International Congress and Convention Association | ICCA
The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry | UFI

1. FAST TRACK TO RECOVERY

Business events are the meeting and marketplaces of industries. Whether regional, national or international, their purpose is to advance commerce via B2B information-sharing, decision-making, problem-solving and planning.



This is especially true for small and medium size enterprises that represent the backbone of every economy. For them, business events tend to be the lead trade platform and sales and innovation channel – even in this era of E-commerce and hybrid work, which, coincidentally, also need business events to grow and foster.

Covid-19 is the world's largest disruptive event in two generations, and has left many commercial sectors and local and regional economies on the brink of collapse. While governments have led the way through the crisis and drawn up many emergency economic plans marking out routes to recovery, business will be the engine to deliver on those plans. **And business needs to connect to perform, now more than ever.**

Business events have historically served to jump-start economic growth in the wake of major setbacks, whether wars, depressions or pandemics. The current crisis forms no exception: organizations are desperate for face-to-face contact around ideas, plans, products and decisions. A vast amount of still-expanding studies and surveys all lead to the same conclusion: that remote and hybrid event solutions only go so far to address the current gap in the human contact considered necessary for business to succeed, from networking and building trust to examining products and generating leads.

There are two other essential reasons to stimulate business events next to their economic flywheel effect:

1. They are a major job and revenue generator for a range of event and supporting service industries, from hospitality to the retail sector; and
2. They play a key role in sustaining and growing regional, national and international travel and tourism infrastructure and supply chains.

“Rapid economic recovery is the way out of this pandemic. Industry’s performance the coming years will drive this. Our business is kick-starting that.” SVEN BOSSU AIPC CEO

GLOBAL ANNUAL IMPACTS OF BUSINESS EVENTS*:

Total economic output:

\$2.5 trillion

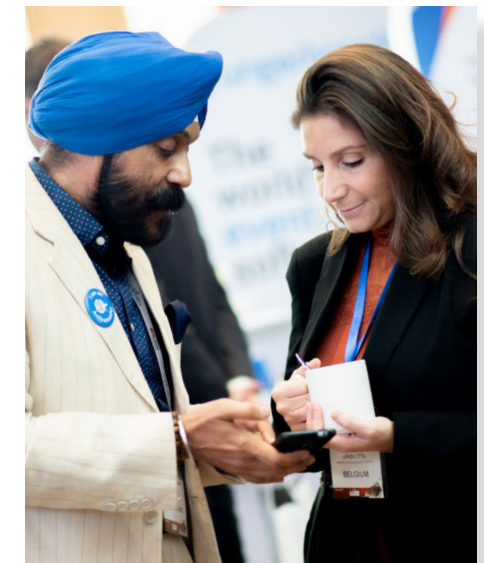
Total GDP contribution:

\$1.5 trillion AND 26 million jobs

Businesspeople involved:

1.5 billion ACROSS 180 COUNTRIES

* Direct and indirect induced impacts for 2017 based on pre-pandemic studies by Oxford Economics commissioned by the Events Industry Council in 2018.



2. THE CHALLENGE

Business events are meant to kick-start economic and societal recovery. So why are they still meeting many different challenges across the world?



The short answer is that nothing goes smoothly in this crisis and that pandemic concerns, impacts, and response regimes vary widely across countries and sectors. The longer answer centers on three points:

1. Business Events get categorized the same as other events

In many countries “events” in the Covid-19 context are regarded as a singular thing: gatherings of people at a singular time and place for a singular purpose. In practice this has meant business events and their health risk profile and related concerns are generally equated with everything from concerts and festivals to major sporting events. This regardless of the fact that most B2B events have a substantially lower risk profile as they tend to be focused, are calm and literally business-like in character, and are not for amusement but essential purposes.

Business events being ‘thrown in’ with other types of events also means that the safety standards and performance record of B2B events are often equated with those of widely divergent, other types of events. The business events management industry

“Industries need B2B meetings as much as governments need G2G meetings. These aren’t mass events. They’re all about business people gathering to get business done.”

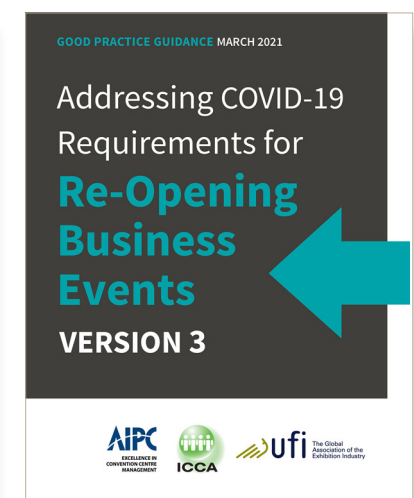
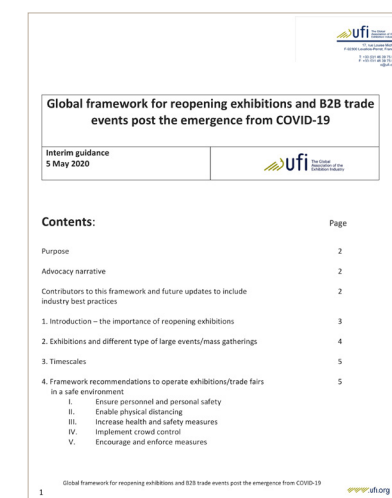
KAI HATTENDORF UFI CEO

however was early to set and adopt standards, continues to improve these based on new insights and innovations, and has a strong record of proving itself safety-minded and safe during the pandemic. Anchoring the safety record of many large business event venues around the world: their serving as **emergency hospitals** and **mass vaccination centers** during peaks of the pandemic, making them intimately familiar with stringent health safety requirements.

So no, business events are not mass gatherings for amusement purposes and yes, they can be safely and successfully conducted under regulatory frameworks according to the most stringent health safety standards. It is not for nothing that the sector was an early adopter and advocate of the ‘Big Five’ of health safety measures: reinforcing personal health safety, enabling physical distancing, implementing crowd control, and encouraging and enforcing measures.

Among the best-known new business event standards and guidance:

- 2020 B2B Global Framework
- 2021 All Secure Standard of Principles
- 2021 G3 Re-Opening Business Events



“Lift or ease international traffic bans as they do not provide added value and continue to contribute to the economic and social stress experienced by States Parties.”

WHO Temporary Recommendation to States parties | 19 January 2022

The worldwide norm is still that business events frequently if not continuously face hurdles that facilitation by governments, policy makers and regulators could lesson if not remove, safely. From recognizing all WHO-approved vaccines everywhere to giving business event visitors temporary essential status to developing a set policy on when and how to initiate a travel ban to helping venues meet health inspection requirements, there is much that can be done, swiftly and safely.

Offering perspective on the challenges of the sector is an Asian event venue manager who recently observed that “We and organizers need to plan and schedule things well ahead of time to make matters work, and so do event attendees. Small, regional events we can manage but it’s not what we’re built for and doesn’t offer us a sustainable business model. Neither do hybrid events. With frequent changes in everything from front door vaccination monitoring protocols to online visa form fill-in requirements to air travel boycotts affecting inbound visitors, often on short notice and not seldom poorly communicated, planning the events we’re meant for has become very hard indeed. Everything just requires more consistency, alignment and communication throughout the entire chain. We desperately need more certainty and standardization to make the system work, and that is in the government’s hands.”

Not acting now runs the risk of slowing recovery efforts, as well as exacerbating the pain felt throughout the industry, this just as its services are headed towards peak demand.

2. Few Governments prioritize Business Events

Government meetings of size and scope have continued almost unabated during the pandemic, witness such successful summits as:

- The ECOWAS summit in Freetown in March 2021
- The G7 in Cornwall in June 2021
- The G20 in Rome in October 2021
- The COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021
- The 17th CSPOC in Kigali in November 2021

What is more, because it was safer, several governments chose to temporarily host parliamentary sessions in large business event venues during the height of the pandemic. Examples include the Jamaica Conference Centre in Jamaica, The Dublin Convention Centre in Ireland, the Bern Expo in Switzerland, and the Arthur Chung Conference Center in Guyana.

All the while, with these and many other G2G events taking place safely, live B2B events by contrast saw a tremendous decline. This without any evidence that those few events that were held – or could have been held – might be any less safe than the G2G meetings. While online and hybrid concepts offer some support and alternate means for B2B events, this has nowhere near closed the gap to the urgent need for sufficient face-to-face business events. Research as well as businesses are clear on this.

A key part of the reason for this state of affairs is that B2B events have been under-recognized by many governments as a crucial collective means of helping drive economic recovery, regionally, nationally and internationally, even with all the evidence to the contrary. As a consequence, in most nations, business event attendees (and to an extent organizers and venues) have effectively been classed as regular visitors and travelers, and not been afforded any special status such as that for so-called “essential personnel”.

3. Few Governments facilitate Business Events

Only relatively few governments including those of Germany, Spain, Canada, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates have paid significant attention to facilitating business events. This includes the area of special exemptions for a license to operate and travel, such as work on multi-national ‘green lane’ concepts permitting tested and vaccinated B2B event travelers to forego mandatory quarantining.



3. THE SOLUTION

The way forward is for government officials, policy makers and regulators – with input from business event organizers and venues – to enable and stimulate business events at regional, national and international levels.



Among key requirements:

- Foster awareness around the importance of business events as a fast track for economic and societal recovery;
- Strengthen the view that business events are not the same as many other types of events as concerns their character and risk profile;
- Enhance the interface between officials and the B2B event industry so as to increase information flows and work on strategic initiative solutions;
- Further improve official-B2B event industry cooperation on the inspection of and adherence to measures required for safe B2B events so as to solidify reliability and public trust; and
- Work towards wider public-facing communications so as to solidify public trust in the safety of business events.

As polls and studies of business event markets make clear, these steps should go far in allowing the B2B events industry to play and optimize its role as a powerful flywheel for regional, national and international commercial growth.

“The economic health of nations depends on industry being able to meet and interact...”

SENTHIL GOPINATH ICCA CEO

Examples of successful government Business Events industry enablement:

GERMANY

The Federal Government separated business events from other types of “mass gatherings.” Classified travel to such events as “essential travel” to avoid quarantine.

SPAIN

The Spanish Minister of Commerce, Tourism and Industry publicly championed the business events sector, declaring the country’s leading international tourism event to be of “strategic national importance.”

THAILAND

First country in the region to implement a “Test and Go” quarantine-free policy for vaccinated travellers in November 2021.

SINGAPORE

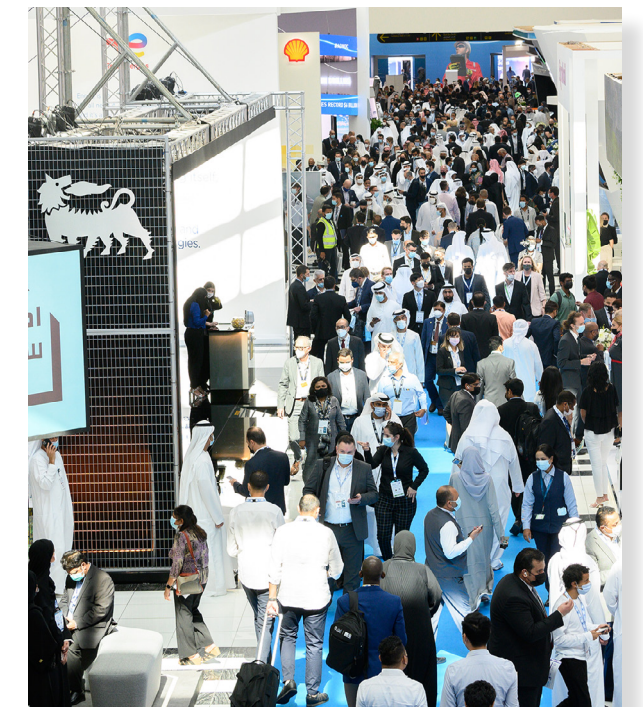
Established a multi-ministry task-force to develop a Work Related Events (WRE) scheme.

CANADA

Targeted federal funding to the business events sector, as part of its wider Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Programme.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Permitted quarantine free travel for business travellers, and established a special events framework and Events Licensing System.



4. OUR APPEAL

As a unified voice for the business events management sector, we call upon governments, policy makers and regulators worldwide to consider the following as a matter of urgency for enabling a fast track economic recovery:



1. Recognize that Business Events are unlike other events

Separate business from other types of events and classify them as essential commercial activities that provide organizers and attendees a special status.

2. Prioritize Business Events over other events

Prioritize business events in or as part of larger reopening strategies and plans, and grant them a license to operate as soon as possible.

3. Facilitate Business Events

Facilitate business events within regulatory boundaries such as by giving attendees 'essential travel' status, adopting green-lane travel concepts and providing for attendee quarantine exemptions.

4. Champion the cause

Business will be the main driver of economic recovery and your expressing confidence and support for events that stimulate this are vital to success.

“We thank you on behalf of the more than 26 million people employed by the global business events industry, and the over 1 billion more whose jobs to some extent depend on our sector’s performance over time.”

THE PRESIDENTS OF THE G3:

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