

Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)

All CVBs are not-for-profit organizations primarily funded by their local governments, usually through a portion of hotel occupancy taxes. Their mission is to promote long-term development and marketing of a destination. They focus on convention sales, tourism marketing, and services. As the tourism marketing arm of the destination, the CVB is responsible for creating public awareness about their destination and, ultimately, booking the meeting. And, because their services are funded by local stakeholders, they are *free* to the planner.

Another term akin to CVBs are Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). This designation came about as a result of a desire to avoid bureaucratic sounding names as the CVB. DMOs use more descriptive action-oriented names. Examples are *Experience Columbus* (Ohio), *VisitPittsburgh*, *Meet Minneapolis*, *San Francisco Travel*, and *Visit KC* (Kansas City, Missouri).

A CVB/DMO can:

- educate you about the hotels, facilities, attractions and venues in their destination,
- help you find the perfect fit for your meeting,
- provide a myriad of convention services,
- serve as your advocate and liaison to the meeting destination community, and
- keep you informed about local developments that might affect your meeting.

Here's what you can expect for FREE:

A. Destination Expertise

CVB sales professionals are experts when it comes to knowing the ins and outs of their cities. They are the best first point of contact to help you find the right fit for any size meeting. They accomplish this by:

- educating you about the hotels in their destination,
- helping you understand the desirability and fit of your meeting for the different types of hotels,
- discussing the seasonality and pattern preferences of the hotels, especially if lower rates are a priority or preferred date availability is an issue, and
- informing you about possible conflicts with other city events or meetings.

B. Request for Proposal (RFP) Distribution

Your CVB expert will work with you to determine the appropriate hotels, meeting/convention facilities and event venues based on your goals and requirements. Also, they assist in creating an RFP for distribution to the hotels of your choice. The expert will follow up with the hotels to be sure they are responding to you in a timely manner and intercepting their questions so you're not inundated with phone calls and emails.

C. Site Inspection Details

When you're ready to visit the hotels, the CVB saves you hours of planning by establishing your itinerary, confirming hotel appointments and accommodations, and arranging for on-site transportation. In most cases, your CVB professional will accompany you, pointing out venues and attractions which may fit into your meeting program. Because you submitted your RFP to the CVB, you are ahead of the game: the specs, food and beverage requirements, goals and objectives have been outlined and explained already, and the proposals you received in response have narrowed the focus of your site trip.

D. Event and Off-Site Selection Support

Besides helping you find the best match in hotels and meeting spaces, CVBs will suggest venues for off-site activities as well as restaurants. They will provide referrals for vendor support services, such as audio-visual providers, airport transportation, etc.

E. Political/Community Liaison

Nobody knows the community better, or is more involved, than the CVB, a fact that puts them in a position to connect you with local political, and media contacts.

F. Attendance Promotion

The CVBs of all meeting destinations provide complimentary maps and general destination information, logos, destination videos, and photo albums which you can use to build awareness and excitement about your meeting's location. Some of the many additional attendance promotion services which CVBs may provide, based on the size of your group, are:

- A customized landing page or link on the destination website,
- Small logoed promotional items,
- Destination materials to promote next year's meeting,
- A destination representative to promote next year's meeting, and
- Assistance with securing sponsorships from local companies that partner with groups for exposure during the meeting.