

What should your DMO do  
for your next meeting?



— *This is* —  
**SO PADRE**

  
*South*  
*Padre*  
ISLAND  
*Make it yours.*





Your next meeting should be nothing short of a magical experience. That's what's expected of you every day. Every meeting has to be better and more successful than the last. And that's not a job you can do alone. What role should your destination play in making your next meeting amazing? How can the destination give you the tools you need to accomplish your herculean task? Success is not just about attendance anymore. You have to worry about satisfaction, networking, team building, and many other things. How can you be sure you get the most out of your partnership with the local convention and visitors bureau (CVB)?

There's no question that location drives attendance to your meetings - people more willingly choose to go to a meeting because it is being held in a place they actually want to go. But your destination's CVB can do more than just identify local caterers, help engage lodging partners, and solve transportation problems. From safety to making your attendees feel welcome in a new city, these local experts can deliver game-changing guidance and assistance when it comes to meeting and exceeding your event satisfaction ratings and whatever other metrics you need to achieve to deem your meeting a rousing success.

# 6 Ways

CVBs should be helping you make your next meeting

## *A Magical Experience*

### 1. Ease safety concerns for meetings.

Given what is likely to be persistent concerns about gathering in groups, CVBs should be providing information on what they offer your attendees in terms of safety and sanitation. From how facilities are sanitized daily to setting rooms to increase opportunities for participating with a level of distance between participants, every convention facility in the nation is focused on doing what they can to assure attendees that they can relax when they make plans to attend your event.

A critical component for every event is to make all safety and sanitation efforts extremely visible as well as provide the protocols in advance of the event. Your attendees will expect everything from temperature checks to workforce contact tracing - and your local meeting team should provide you with information you can share within your marketing materials to put those attendees at ease.

### 2. Virtual capabilities - more than a webinar.

There is no question that nothing can replace the power of gathering in person. Networking, collaboration, and true connection require face-to-face interaction to work best. Still, planners should look for ways the CVBs can help you engage with distance attendees in every aspect of a meeting. It's likely that some presenters or more vulnerable attendees may look for ways to attend from a distance, and making that element more accessible will be an appreciated benefit you can offer.



Ask your CVB how they can support not just virtual presenters (which will include providing robust connectivity and ways to capture workshops, seminars, and large keynotes that include a level of interactivity) but destination activities. For example, a destination can offer tours of local cultural sites or even a live feed from an after-hours event or virtual happy hours for those attending remotely. This way, no guests feel left out. Instead, they are a part of the magic.





### 3. Find unique ways to integrate your ethics with your meeting.

We live in a purpose-driven world. More and more, businesses are focusing on end goals that are bigger than their bottom line, and they measure success beyond profits. Your CVB should be helping you find ways to incorporate your organization's priorities into their offerings in ways that are unique to their destination. For a recent Unitarian Universalist Association meeting in Kansas City, their rigorous sustainability program was a priority for their meeting planning. According to reports, in the end, Visit KC was able to divert 92 percent of event waste to meet the group's goals. This helped them achieve their own success metrics and also create unique and memorable meeting experiences.

In South Padre Island companies have gathered together to help stop beach erosion with a dune planting team building exercise. Sea oats help fight the damage from hurricanes and tropical storms as well as provide habitat for coastal wildlife. Beach clean ups are also popular options for meetings. "When large groups decide they want to do something meaningful during their visit, it's a win-win for all involved. It not only provides a sense of pride among participants but it can make a lasting difference in a community," said Ed Caum, executive director for the South Padre Island CVB.

### 4. Filling room blocks - with lodging partner help.

Every meeting planner knows how it goes: the closer you get to your hotel block deadline, the more dramatically your open rate seems to drop on your email list. Even though associations traditionally have the highest open rate of any industry, event email fatigue is a real problem for meeting planners. This presents a real challenge as key deadlines approach because when open rates drop, critical deadlines can be missed for everything from lodging to catering.

There's a solution your CVB can offer - a strong marketing partnership with hoteliers. Time and time again planners report that when hotel groups or the destination sends their own email to attendees, open rates double or triple. Be sure to ask your CVB if they or the lodging partner will assist by also reaching out to attendees about booking deadlines.



## 5. Welcome from the community.

Nothing makes a traveler feel more valued than when a city itself seems to welcome them. From signs at the airport to local businesses with shout outs to attendees, rolling out longer and bigger welcomes can set the tone for a community. Ideally, your CVB can take it further than signs and logos at the Convention Centre.

“We like to inform our restaurants when a local group has set up an evening for ‘dinner on your own,’” says Ed Caum, South Padre Island CVB’s executive director. “Restauranteurs can then offer priority seating, drink and food specials, or set aside a seating area for attendees.” When the information is shared with attendees, they discover an element of the destination they would otherwise never experience, making the entire trip that much more memorable.

## 6. The experience that is invaluable.

Perhaps the most important element your DMO can offer is their experience with other meetings and groups that have been the most successful. Every destination has a slate of activities and offerings that appeal to different audiences; the more they know about your audience, the more they can relate efforts that other groups have undertaken that were real home runs for their attendees.

Some of the advice could be fairly run of the mill, like offering expertise on navigating busy times in the destination or understanding seasonal weather conditions that could impact outdoor activities. Ask your CVB to take it a step beyond. They have a deep understanding of the local opportunities that have worked for previous meetings, something that can be invaluable in designing unique and effective outings and team events. For example, a local expert birder could offer a tour of a nature facility, providing a break from the steady stream of indoor presentations. Building sandcastles on the beach can be structured as a team-building exercise. Volunteering to rebuild dunes or volunteering to repaint a community center with the help of a local muralist could be the activity that has your attendees talking about the power of gathering as a team for years to come.

When it comes time to examine a potential destination for your next event, be sure to reach out to the team at the CVB to explore how they can elevate your next event. The best ideas are likely already there, just waiting to be discovered.

