

The JMIC Global Manifesto

An Industry Rationale for the Use of Business
Events as Primary Agents for Post-Pandemic
Economic Recovery and Renewal

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Tasked with the need to re-start economies devastated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments right now need tools and platforms that can advance a broad-based recovery in the most effective ways.



We all recognize that the primary value of the Meetings Industry is the role it plays in facilitating and supporting essential exchanges in the areas of professional, corporate, academic and social development. These are integral to not only economic advancement but societal development as a whole.

This sector is therefore a critical element in delivering recovery as well as transition and renewal that can be immediately utilized by governments responding to these requirements.

This document articulates and promotes a set of consistent, high-level arguments. They make the case that our industry should be utilized as a strategic tool for recovery, transition, and renewal.

The contents of the manifesto are not new – they are consistent with the arguments we have been putting forward for many years about the critical role of business events in economic and societal advancement. We can show that what we are proposing is working – from implementations around the world – and that applied to the challenges governments are facing with the COVID-19 challenge and the economic fallout, they will work as well.



A TWO-PART PROPOSITION

The Manifesto is not a stand-alone proposition. Re-opening of the industry for any purpose can only be achieved if accompanied by solid evidence that **this can be done safely and with full respect for the health protocols now in place around the world.** This is not only critical for concerned communities but as assurance to government decision-makers that this aspect is well in hand. In this regard, arguments should be accompanied by clear demonstrations of the measures that have been taken and reference made to industry references and resources that demonstrate **an ability to comply with new standards and expectations for health and safety.**

See **COVID-19 Re-Opening Guide**

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

We know that the decisions to utilize business events as a vehicle for economic stimulation and diversification and to re-activate events under appropriate health measures **will always be local.** But local authorities benefit from experiences in other parts of the world. The primary purpose of this manifesto is thus to act as a resource that industry members can use to inform and align their own local initiatives.

By adapting general principles to the specific needs of individual countries and destinations, the result will be **destination-specific strategies that activate the power of business events for economic stimulation for the most urgent priorities and policies of local and regional governments.**

Business Events as Strategic Tools for Driving Post-Pandemic Recovery and Renewal

OUR POSITION | That the meetings industry, which comprises a range of efficiently interconnected organizers, service providers, suppliers and facilities engaged in the development and delivery of meetings, conferences, exhibitions and related activities (collectively referred to as business events) can and should be utilized as a highly efficient and cost-effective vehicle for driving economic recovery and renewal by providing an essential platform for the economic, academic, professional and business interactions required to re-ignite these sectors.

Here's Why | 15 Ways Business Events Create Strategic Advantage in Economic Recovery and Renewal



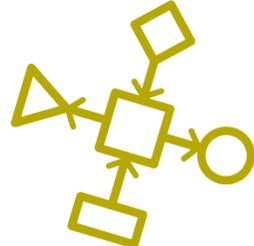
1 | Innovation & Reinvention



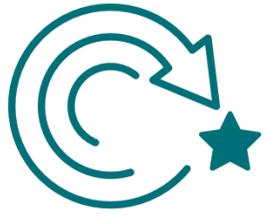
2 | Multi-sector Impacts



3 | Relationships & Trust



4 | Diversification & Self-sufficiency



5 | Transition & Renewal



6 | Talent & Investment



7 | Path to Sustainable Development



8 | Controlled Environment



9 | Community Legacies



10 | Uses Existing Investments



11 | Digitization



12 | Laboratories for Public Policy



13 | Support for the Visitor Economy



14 | Image & Reputation



15 | Measureable ROI



1 | Innovation & Reinvention

Business events drive commerce, innovation, re-invention, knowledge transfer and transition – all critical requirements for recovery:

The entire purpose of these events is to **accelerate progress** in every sector they support through communications, information sharing and collective engagement. This naturally facilitates the kind of innovation and re-invention that is always a driver in economic and professional advancement but will be particularly critical in adapting to the demands and expectations that will result from the “new” economies and economic priorities arising in the post-pandemic period.



2 |

Multi-sector Impacts

Business events simultaneously advance a wide range of different sectors:

Business events are an efficient means of supporting the recovery and advancement of a **wide range of economic, professional, academic and business sectors**. As a result, they can drive activation, renewal and re-engagement across the many different sectors that will need to be stimulated in order to deliver a broad based recovery rather than simply addressing a limited range of these sectors individually. **They enable action by others rather than being limited to what they can achieve on their own.**

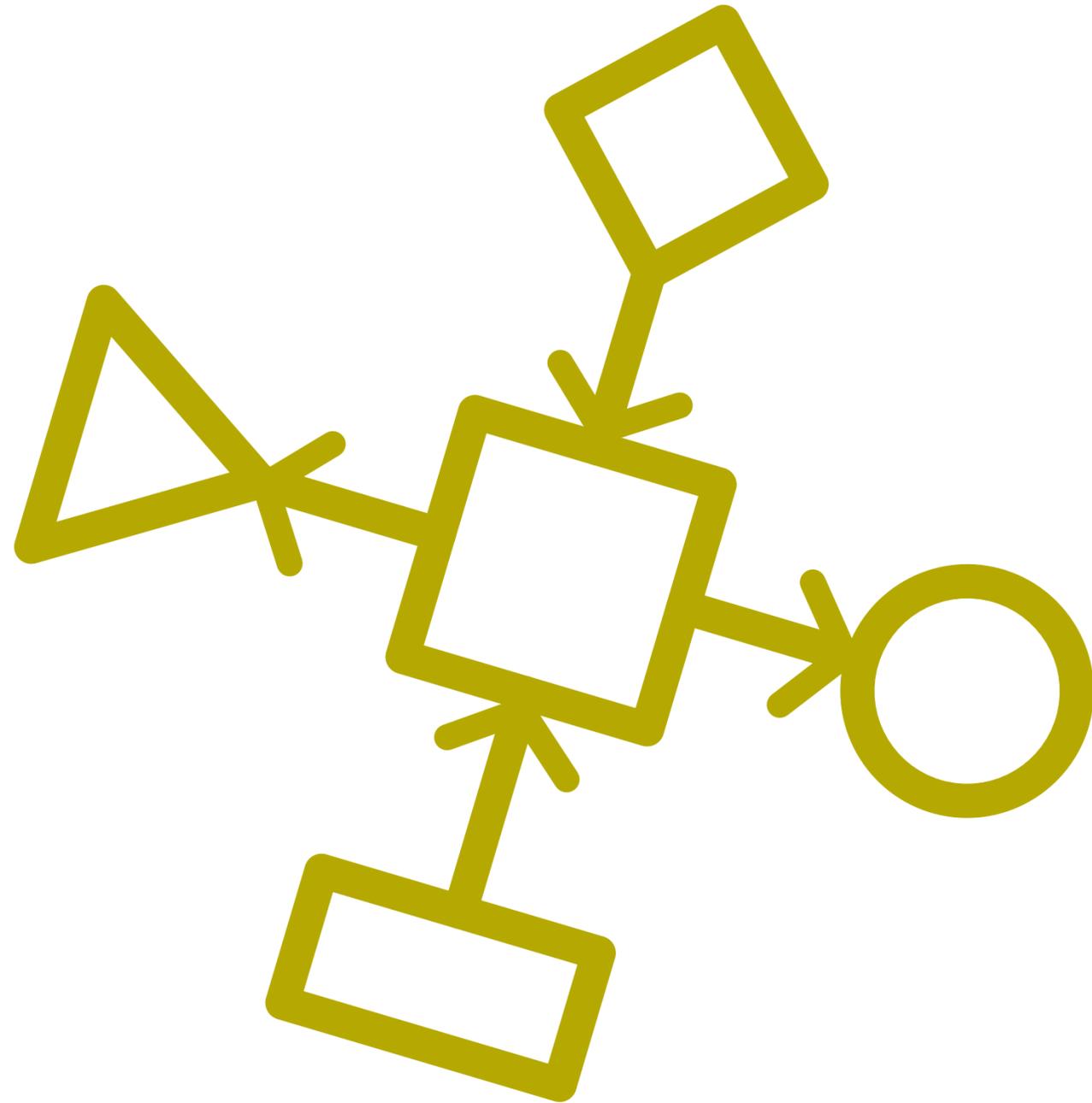


3 |

Relationships & Trust

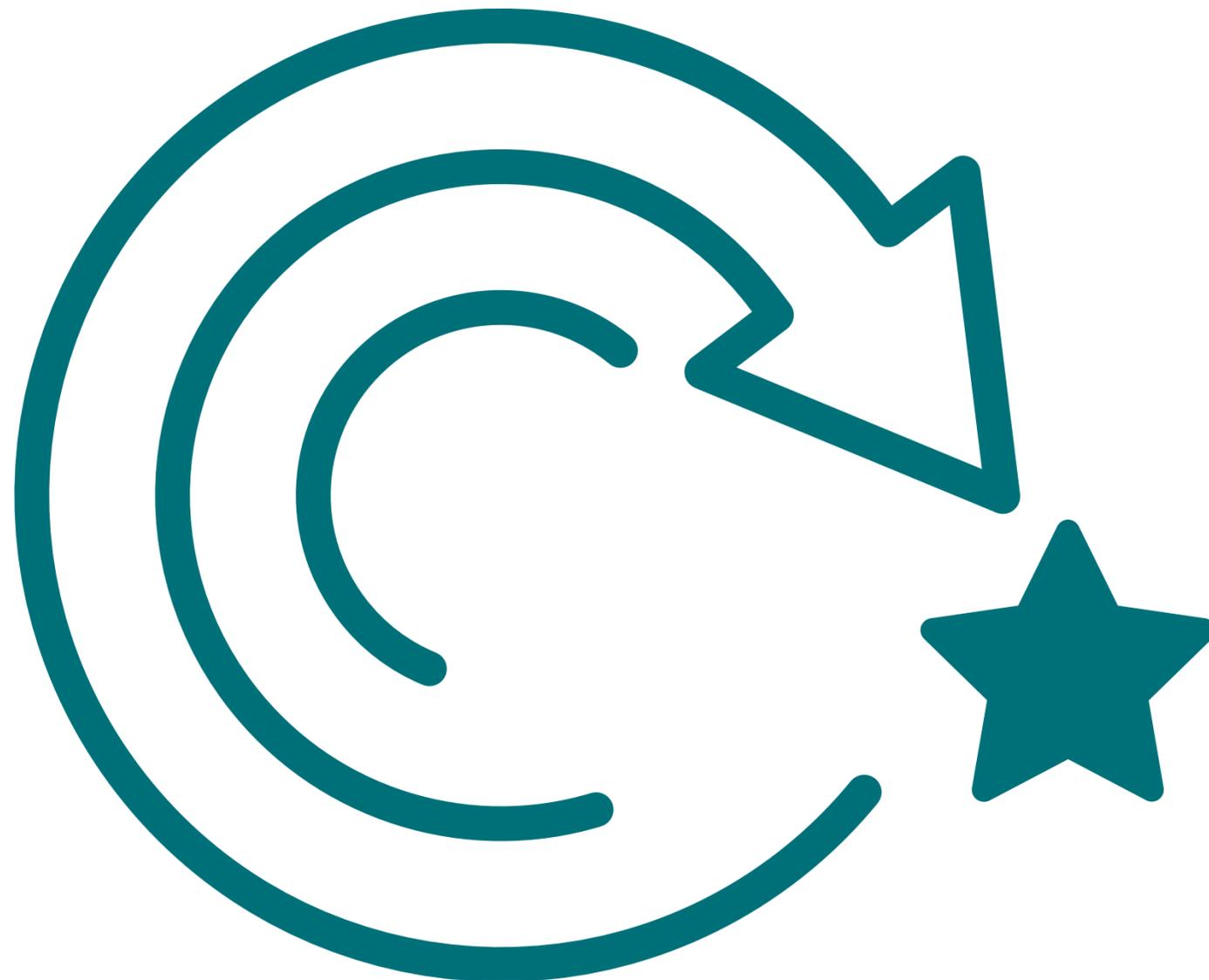
Business events restore relationships and build trust:

Business events efficiently **utilize the collective power of group dynamics** and thinking to achieve a high level of integration. This is directly relevant to the need to repair the many “disconnects” that will have resulted from measures taken to isolate and distance during the pandemic. They are also about **creating and maintaining the productive networks** which will be critically important in the face of the kinds of global tensions (border closures, transportation shutdowns, isolation measures) that have come about in the course of the pandemic and will persist beyond the time when such initial restrictions are removed.



4 | Diversification & Self-sufficiency

They facilitate economic diversification and self-sufficiency: With the COVID-19 experience having disrupted supply chains and enhanced the evident value of economic self-sufficiency, many communities have realized the **strength and resiliency to be had in a more self-contained and diversified local economy.** Business events facilitate this process by supporting the kinds of exchanges that lead to new relationships, investments and non-traditional business activities that can be used to drive diversification in the local and regional economy, up to and including the creation of new events that engage key interests in a collective approach to selected sectors.



5 |

Transition & Renewal

They are the key to economic and societal transition and to repositioning in the “new” economies of the future:

Evolving social and economic conditions arising from the pandemic-induced recession means that the new economy will likely be quite different, embodying elements of the experience and knowledge economies that are replacing older models. Business events that accompany recovery will serve as necessary **agents of change and transformation** to ensure a more progressive form of economic activity and a more stable and therefore resilient economy for the future, which is a new goal for governments everywhere.



6 | Talent & Investment

They attract the talent and investment needed for economic diversification and can be focused on priority areas for government policy:

Business events, particularly international events, are **magnets for individuals and investment resources** that drive key development and professional sectors. As a result, they are important strategic tools that can be used by a region or destination to selectively stimulate top economic and social development priorities. Criteria for pursuing specific business events can be readily adjusted to focus on areas of specific interest for economic, social and educational development that address government policy priorities for key sector development.



7 | Path to Sustainable Development

They lead the “renewed” economy toward sustainability:

A new priority for most governments is a focus on **sustainable development** due to a variety of new agendas (environmental, educational, social equity) that again require productive interactions to succeed. The key elements of sustainability have been embedded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), which are in turn directly addressed by industry events as demonstrated in recent studies that show meetings, conventions and exhibitions in fact address the widest possible spectrum of UNSDG’s.



8 |

Controlled Environment

They take place in a highly controlled environment with strong health and safety measures in place and detailed contact tracing information available:

Because of the highly structured nature of business events and facilities they represent a **much more secure form of gathering relative to other forms of public assembly.** In most cases, participants are pre-registered and organizers have many options for communicating with them in advance of, during and after an event. In addition, facility policies are generally such that rigorous standards are in place to ensure far better compliance with accepted protocols than would be possible in a general public setting or other gatherings such as concerts or sporting events.



9 |

Community Legacies

They leave valuable, relevant legacies in the host community:

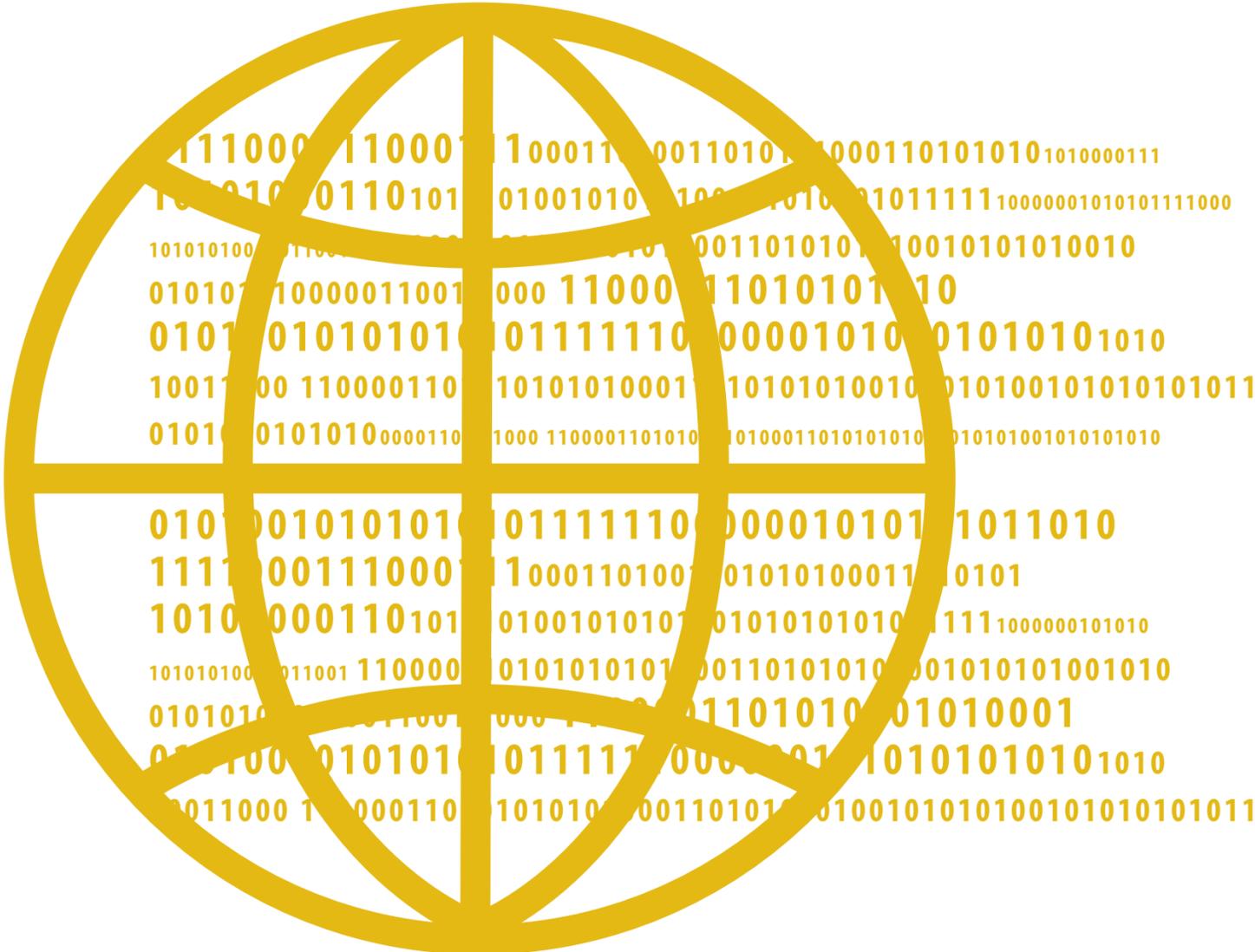
Major business and professional events **generate key legacies for the host community** in terms of destination profile, transferred skills and knowledge, new networks and image enhancement. These legacies can be shaped to address priority community needs through collaboration and creating shared objectives with the organizer, which at the same time is a way for a destination to compete more effectively for new business and re-shape how influential attendees regard that destination in a global context.



10 | Uses Existing Investments

They often have funding mechanisms already in place:

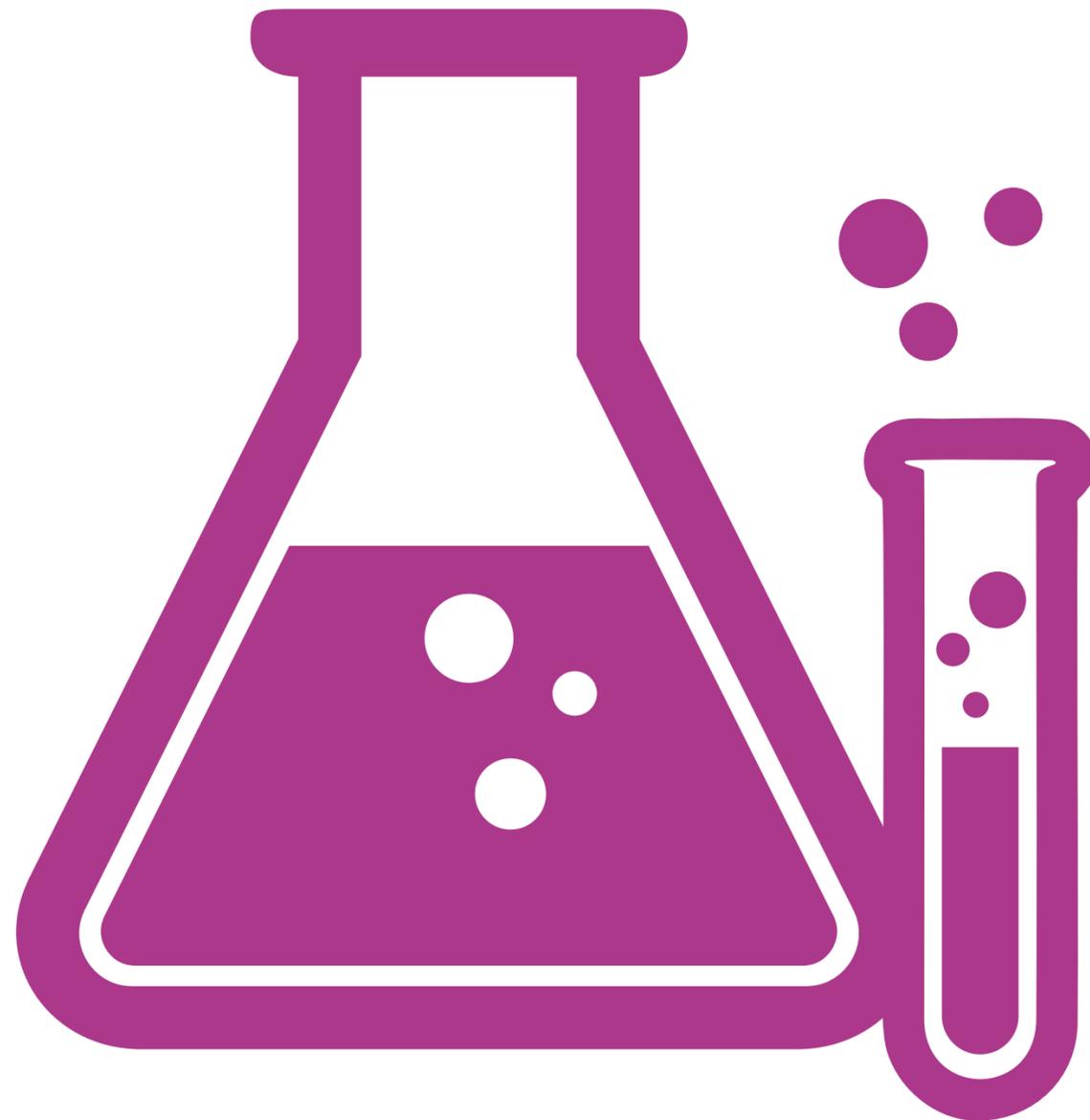
The nature of business events is that they are **largely user-pay**, which means that they offer huge leverage for any investment. As a result, they are not as capital-intensive as other sectors seeking support but still facilitate the desired outcomes. They also **efficiently utilize existing government investments** such as event facilities, transportation systems and infrastructure already in place such that business incentives can be quickly generated without the need to establish entirely new programs.



11 | Digitization

They are already responding to the growing movement toward digitization and can deliver content and results in person, via the virtual world or both:

As the world struggles with the disruptions associated with the pandemic a benefit arising is that **most business events today have a companion “virtual” component that can further leverage global exposure**, and these have become increasingly sophisticated. This means that the potential impacts of an event can be extended to a global audience, with correspondingly greater image and legacy benefits for the host community.



12 |

Laboratories for Public Policy

They can be used as “laboratories” for government policies by shifting the risk for testing new re-opening and business development strategies:

Many aspects of the re-opening equation carry significant risks, including the possibility of a return to lockdown and the need to experiment with alternate economic recovery strategies. In these respects, **business events can be valuable tools for testing new approaches in a safe, well-contained environment** before they are more generally deployed, effectively testing both the direction to a “new normal” and the appetite for alternative business and social strategies.

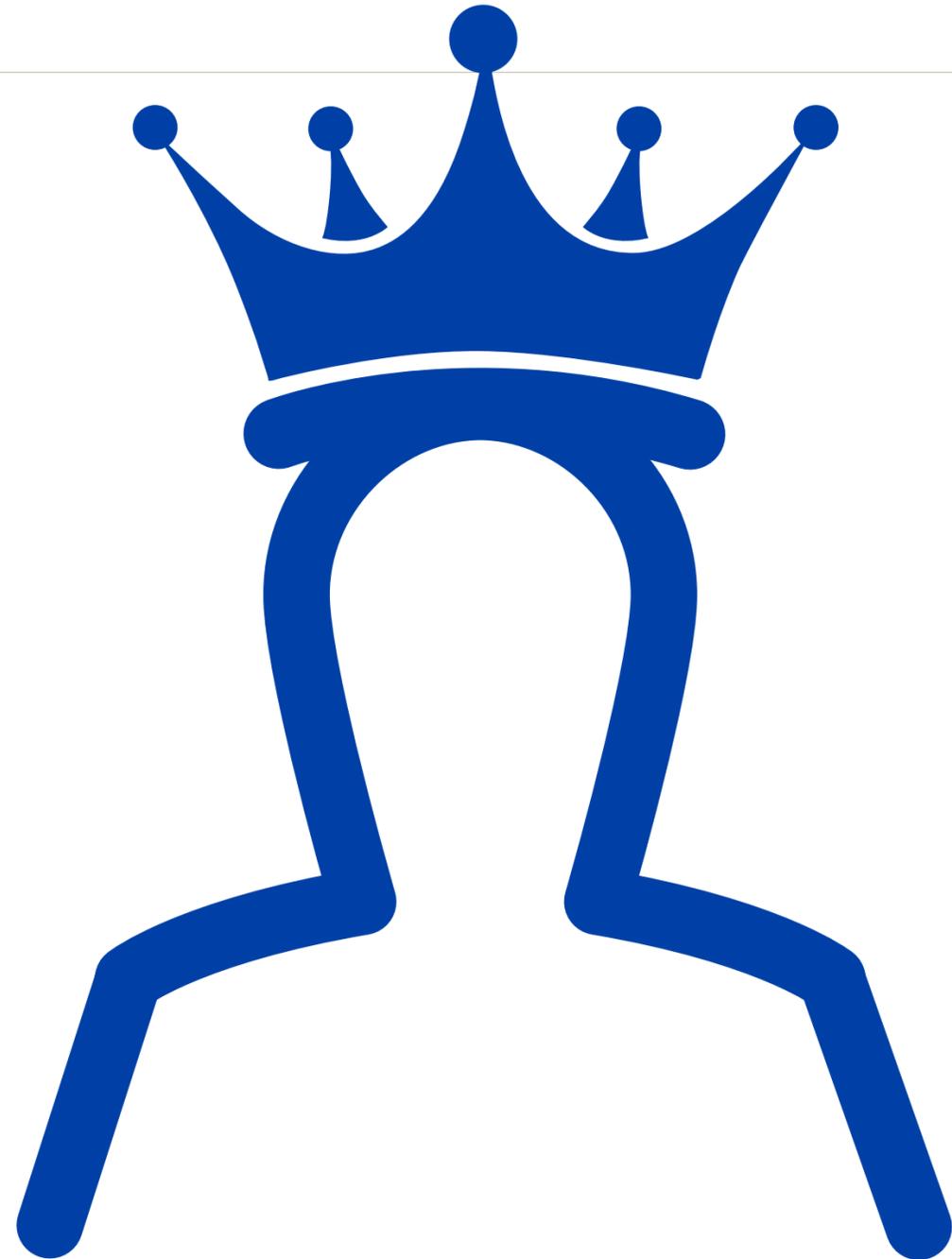


13 |

Support for the Visitor Economy

They support the visitor economy and create a specific, timely rationale and incentive for travel:

The road to travel recovery will likely be a long one – and many “optional” travel activities will thus likely lag far behind the restoration of capacity. However, business events offer a time-sensitive imperative that help overcome reluctance to travel and thus **stimulate destination travel in a time when it is needed the most** to enhance travel and hospitality revenues. They also offer opportunities for second or third tier destinations to build their profile at a time when many travelers are looking for new options.

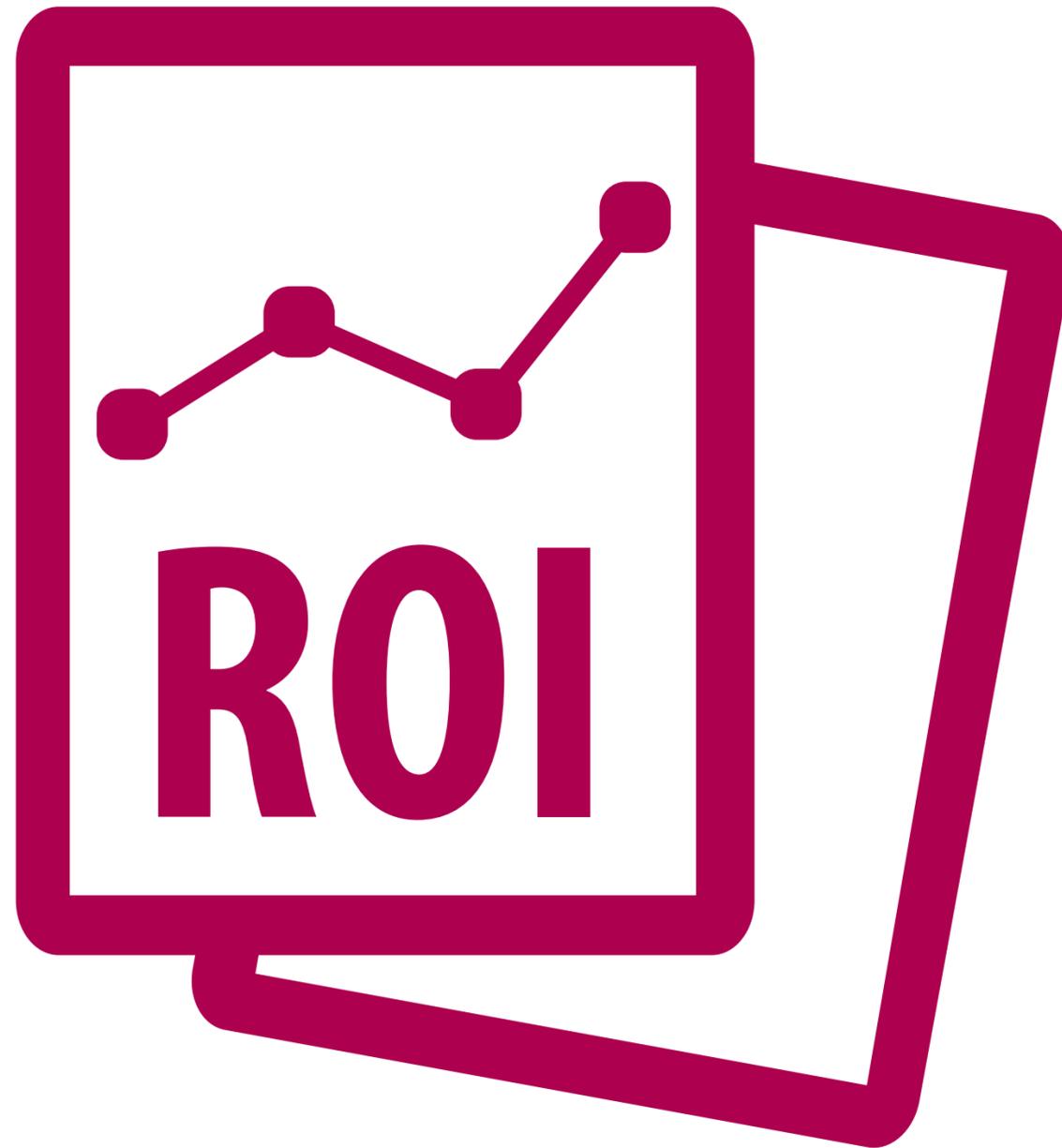


14 |

Image & Reputation

Signature business events can make (or restore) a reputation as a business centre:

Prominent business events generate profile and prestige for the host destination in a globally-visible way. In the changed world that will emerge from the COVID-19 experience **established destinations will need to consolidate their leadership position** under new conditions. At the same time, there will be **new opportunities for other destinations** to raise their profile as attractive business destinations if they can offer alternate attributes such as environmental quality and safety which will be increasingly in demand in a post-pandemic world.



15 |

Measurable ROI

Their outputs are measurable – so ROI can be clearly demonstrated:

While the value proposition for business events includes both the economic impacts of delegate spending (tourism benefits) to economic and professional development outcomes they generate, reliable measures including sophisticated economic impact models, are already in place for both. **Delegates and other event participants are not “incidental” visitors – so their travel purposes and spending patterns can be measured accurately and the returns can be measured and reported with greater precision.**

FIVE IMPORTANT POLICY IMPLICATIONS | To be applied in a practical way, the arguments above can and need to be embedded in government policies and structure. A starting point for this process is an acknowledgment that:

1 | CONTROLLED GATHERINGS

Business events are **not public gatherings but highly controlled assemblies** and should be classified and distinguished as distinct from generic mass gatherings for the purposes of re-opening policies.

2 | ECONOMIC vs TOURISM POLICY

Business events are **economic, scientific and professional in nature** and only incidentally tourism-related (in that they support the hospitality economy). They should therefore be seen in the **context of trade, economic development, social and investment policies** rather than tourism policy.

3 | ALIGNMENT WITH POLICY PRIORITIES

There should be an effort to **align business events and overall government policy priorities** so that events with the greatest potential to support / advance those priorities (health, education, innovation, major events) can be targeted and more effectively utilized for this purpose.

4 | AVAILABLE FUNDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing investments in infrastructure and institutions should be reviewed for their potential to enhance competitiveness in the business events market. **Financial support and increased competitiveness can often be delivered by offering relief to event organizers** for the use of existing government-owned facilities rather than creating new incentive programs.

5 | AN INTEGRAL PART OF A 'VISION' FOR THE FUTURE

With governments today being called upon to articulate and demonstrate a **vision for both health and safety management and economic recovery**, business events can be incorporated into such strategies as strategic tools to achieve the stated goals.

Ten Steps to Delivering the Message

The Global Manifesto is not an end in itself – it is rather a framework for addressing the central concept which is that business events can and should be seen as a priority vehicle for economic and social recovery and renewal.

Due to the world-wide and highly decentralized nature of our industry, this is not a message that can be effectively delivered from a single central authority. It must instead be communicated and argued locally and regionally, where local industry members are in the best possible position to understand and interpret local needs and identify the best opportunities for communicating effectively with governments and the community.

Part of the manifesto is therefore advice on how this can be done by the industry. Based on the experiences of many industry members, here are some key steps to consider;

1 | Get organized:

No individual or group can do this job alone. Governments will want to know that they are getting a consensus view. This means that if there is an existing local organization in place they should be empowered to act and speak on behalf of the industry as a whole and if there is not, one should be formed.

In organizing such an entity, consider potential alliances with other relevant organizations such as professional, business, academic or special interest groups with shared understanding and objectives. This kind of alignment will further strengthen your position.

2 | Do your research:

At a minimum, your group should understand who key decision-makers are; what their current policies and priorities are for community and economic advancement and what positions if any they have on issues relating to business events. There will also likely be a statement of government priorities for action – potentially in the form of an election platform statement – that can also be a very useful reference to what their priority concerns and “promises” are.

3 | Identify the top issues in your community:

In most parts of the world today, health and safety on the one hand and economic recovery on the other are top priorities. However, many other issues will be seen as priorities as well and these should be understood as they likely relate to business events that can be used as examples of how business events can support community concerns and government policy priorities.

4 | Organize your data and “stories”:

Arguments must be accompanied by examples and numbers to support and illustrate them. Hard data such as economic impact study results are helpful but vastly underestimate true industry value so consider enhancing this with case studies that illustrate event outcomes from your own experiences. Legacies, destination image enhancements and relevant knowledge transfers are often particularly useful as they enable others to more easily understand the overall concepts at a practical level and can be extrapolated to other events.

5 | Access available industry resources:

Many resources and case studies are already available and can be accessed via the JMIC website www.themeetingsindustry.org or www.theiceberg.org, among others. These includes other resources relating directly to the health and safety dimension, and most are freely available, including a recent **Addressing COVID-19 Requirements for Re-Opening Business Events** jointly published by AIPC, ICCA and UFI and available via their respective web sites as well as the JMIC site. Referencing such documents will not only save time and effort but also demonstrate the effort that has been put into managing issues of concern.

6 | Do the “translation”:

The first principle of successful communications is to organize your arguments into terms that are of greatest interest to your audience, and this is particularly the case with governments. This needs to be positioned not as what you *want* but rather what you can do for *them* and may require you to review their list of priorities as above to select examples of how the industry can help them achieve their own objectives. Avoid the use of industry jargon, acronyms or agendas and instead focus on areas you know to be of importance to your audience.

7 | Create a demonstration project:

Rather than speaking in general terms, it is far better to select one urgent priority and illustrate the principle by explaining the kind of event that would address these and how, in practical terms, this would be done. It may be best to actually propose a specific project (i.e., a small and highly organized event to bring together a local / regional audience on a topic of priority interest to both address the issue and potential issues and to demonstrate how such an event can be safely held.

8 | Delivery: choose an occasion / use your contacts:

Timing is key in delivering your industry message – there are often forums that lend themselves to putting forward a proposal which is well thought-out. However, a private audience with a key decision-maker or committee can be more effective as it allows for detailed review. Personal / professional contacts with politicians / officials may be the best route if this lends credibility; at the same time, government figures often officiate or participate at events taking place in such local facilities as convention centres which can provide a pre/post opportunity for a conversation.

9 | Practice your “elevator conversation”:

Often an opportunity will present itself unexpectedly (i.e., during an event occasion as above) and there will only be enough time to make an overall comment or two that must generate enough interest to produce a further opportunity. A very compact statement (such as paraphrasing the manifesto, using a locally relevant example) may be sufficient to start an engagement but only if it is decided and rehearsed in advance to ensure clarity and an interest in following up.

10 | Feed back to your colleagues:

Sharing is the essence of collaboration, and is an integral part of our industry. Once you have organized and delivered a campaign, document it and its outcomes and share this with industry colleagues who are all looking for insights into how our story can be most effectively communicated to governments. JMIC and The Iceberg both maintain repositories of industry resources and welcome any new additions that will help inform and advise industry members of your achievements.

This document prepared and issued by the Joint Meetings Industry Council

**JMIC is grateful for the industry-wide input received
in support of the development of this manifesto.**

FOR MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Excerpts of this input can be viewed as part of the 2-part JMIC / Iceberg webinar by accessing links on either of their web sites:

www.themeetingsindustry.org | www.the-iceberg.org