

# FACTSHEET

## Beyond Tourism Benefits: Measuring the social legacies of business events



**Business events – such as international conferences, conventions and incentives – are often viewed as the less glamorous cousin of the leisure travel market. However, new research reveals that this lucrative sector delivers above and beyond the tally of tourism receipts, with events generating long-lasting economic and social benefits, that drive a knowledge led economy.**

In 2011, Business Events Sydney (BESydney), Australia's leading convention bureau, commissioned the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) to undertake research into the benefits and legacies of business events.

Beyond Tourism Benefits: Measuring the social legacies of business events documents the findings from this quantitative study that assessed the outcomes and legacies of business events across five international congresses held in Sydney between 2009 and 2011.

### Purpose of the research

Broader benefits of hosting and participating in business events have long been recognised within the business events industry. The UTS study was designed to explore the extent of these benefits and to define their value, enabling a more holistic measurement model, beyond the tourism receipts generated from delegate and exhibitor expenditure, which will change the way business events are evaluated and understood internationally.

### The findings

The Beyond Tourism Benefits research demonstrates that the international norm to evaluate the business events sector on tourism receipts alone overlooks perhaps the most valuable legacies – the many educational, intellectual, trade and investment outcomes from business events.

The report demonstrated a clear and strong connection between hosting and participating in business events and a range of benefits and outcomes for not just delegates but sponsors and exhibitors, professional industries, the education sector, the host destination and the wider community.

Business events deliver long-term benefits such as the ability to increase professional knowledge, improve local education offerings and career opportunities, disseminate the latest technical practices, forge international networks, drive research and business collaboration, profile industry issues, lead to social change, and more.

Some of the most interesting findings from the report relate to benefits for the host destination, local industry through trade and investment and the flow on effects to the young workforce and education sectors.

### Some key findings included:

#### *Benefits for the host destination*

- **87%** agreed that successful hosting of the events has enhanced Sydney's reputation as global business events destination
- **82%** believed the events exposed local delegates in the conference destination to cutting edge research and world's best practice
- **75%** agreed events showcase local talent from the conference destination
- **68%** agreed events enhanced the capacity of the academic sector in the conference destination

#### *Benefits for the delegates*

- **> 90%** believed congresses have facilitated the dissemination of new knowledge, ideas, techniques, materials and technologies
- **97%** agreed that they had shared information with colleagues and peers
- **85%** have applied new insights to their professional practice
- **64%** have shared information with students
- **85%** believed attending congresses contributed to building the knowledge and capabilities of young people working in the sector

#### *Benefits for exhibitors and sponsors*

- **90%** gained product exposure/ awareness
- **90%** obtained leads for future business
- **78%** improved brand awareness
- **73%** contributed to the development of the sector
- **56%** increased domestic sales
- **49%** increased export sales



## Benefits and outcomes were diverse; however, five distinct legacies categories were identified:

### Intrinsic legacies

Intrinsic legacies are a result of the collaborative environment developed at business events, delegates have the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and practices and affirm their professional sense of purpose. This shared social context proves invaluable to professional development and enhances a delegates potential to work within the chosen industry sector.

### Practice legacies

Skills and knowledge that delegates gain – such as learning new insights, surgical techniques, sharing new ideas and identifying solutions to solving problems – can be incorporated into professional practice globally, as well as within the host destination. This legacy results from delegates returning to their places of work or sharing their findings to industry communities after the conference.

### Social legacies

Social legacies represent the camaraderie that develops around the congress, the appeal of engaging with other like-minded people, the relationships that are enhanced and developed and the broader benefits that accrue to the communities in which the congress is held. Business events develop a social space that is important as it facilitates and reinforces social interaction and, in turn, influences the effectiveness of collaborative learning, as well as fosters economically beneficial professional relationships.

### Economic legacies

Aside from the expected economic benefits that arise from tourism spend, there are other economic legacies that can eventuate from business events. Firstly, there is the heightened possibility of international and national investment in local industries as a result of networking and relationship building at the conference. Secondly, there are the workforce practices, better education, new investments, enhanced funding and better industry sector policies, that all contribute to industry innovation and productivity. Thirdly, congresses have been shown to contribute to skilled job migration to a host destination, which can contribute to a vital knowledge led economy.

### Attitudinal legacies

Attitudinal legacies arise from the reactions of delegates through their experiences at the congress, and from governments, the private sector and other individuals who become aware of important issues that are communicated through the international and local media.

It is worth noting that the legacies are not mutually exclusive - a number of the discovered benefits and outcomes have multiple legacies.

BESydney will be using the research findings to inform its ongoing strategy, share with stakeholders, develop a toolkit to assist business event organisers in stimulating these legacies at their events and the organisation hopes to roll out bi-annual research into this emerging area.

The full *'Beyond Tourism Benefits: Measuring the social legacies of business events'* report can be accessed at [www.businesseventssydney.com.au](http://www.businesseventssydney.com.au)