

"How you can make the most of CVB services and resources"

You will find most Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs – aka CVAs; VCAs; DMOs etc) have a wealth of services and resources to assist meeting professionals from inception through development and execution of meetings, conferences, retreats and other special events. CVBs are usually funded by the local bed tax and, therefore, their services are provided to your organization at no cost.

The following are some suggestions for making the most of CVB services and resources:

- **Tell us ~ who are your attendees?**
This may be the most important piece of information to give your CVB the power to work with their hotel and venue partners as they develop proposals to submit to your organization. Who is coming? Why are they meeting? How much of their time will be spent in meetings and sessions? What percentage of your group typically comes early or stays late to experience the location attractions? **VERY IMPORTANT** – What do they hope to accomplish during their stay?
- **Your Request for Proposal (RFP) is very important ~** Make sure to give your CVB the type of information that will insure you receive comprehensive proposals (*don't hold your cards*).
 1. Flexibility with your pattern - your best leverage for better rates!
 2. Seasonality - Looking into specific areas of the country? (*i.e. north, south, east, and west.*)
The time of year you choose may give you very desirable rates. Ask your CVB to define peak, off-peak and shoulder months and discuss this with your group prior to submitting your RFP. Be sure to include at least one set of alternative dates for consideration.
 3. History - Many organizations withhold this very important information. Where you have held your meetings prior gives great clues about your groups' preferences. When the CVB receives this information, they are able to identify attractions and activities in their area best suited for your group. Additionally, this information helps when distributing your RFP. The hotels and venues are able to address specific opportunities to build interest and excitement for your attendees that will help make your meeting/conference more successful.
- **Site review coordination ~** This is where your CVBs shine! Your CVB representative will obtain room nights from your 'top of list' locations and develop a full itinerary that will include offsite options and attractions.
- **Congratulations! You've selected your host hotel and venues.** Your CVB is still your best resource as your plans begin to take shape. Especially in today's economic environment, you can count on your representative to be there as your eyes and ears. Most important of all – Your CVB has the local contacts (*from speakers to entertainment and transportation companies*) that will make planning your event a breeze.
- **The Big Event is here!** Your attendees are filtering in to attend your best conference ever, and your CVB is there to help smooth any last minute issues. Most CVBs offer maps and brochures in 'Welcome Bags' for your registration table. Many CVBs will assist you with name badges for a minimal fee. Be sure to ask your CVB for a full list of conference services ~ you'll be glad you did!
- **Thanks for the memories!** As your last attendee departs for home, be sure to take a moment to review and reflect with your CVB representative. Since all the services you receive from your CVB are complimentary, the best way to thank a CVB for their attentive services is to provide them with feedback. Tell them about the services you valued most, and let them know about any services that would make things easier for you and groups like yours. Your CVB is very willing to hear all about the positive aspects and your constructive critiques, as they know that is the best way to develop more interest in their city. Don't forget to give your CVB representative a written letter of reference regarding their assistance and the value of their services, and be certain to refer associates to your CVB representative. Not only will your CVB representative appreciate this gesture, but your associates will also be thankful.