



# The Power of **Accessible Education** for Economic Growth

At the heart of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lie 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set to create a better world. The fourth sustainability goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – a principle IAPCO is very much aligned with in achieving its own mission: 'to raise the standards of service amongst its members and other sectors of the meetings industry by means of continuing education and interaction with other professionals.'

**E**ducation fuels growth, drives job creation and opens new investment opportunities. We appreciate that, by building capacity in standards of professional conference organisation, this provides the building blocks on which economic growth can flourish. International meetings create a buzz, build public and political awareness, and provide a focus for the host destination to showcase excellence. All of which leads to inward investment and job creation.

IAPCO is committed to do its bit providing everyone interested in the economic impact of conferences with the right education to meet the IAPCO quality standard as an integral component of the infrastructure required to open new destinations for international meetings.

As part of our overarching education strategy, IAPCO is particularly focused on achieving three targets from SDG4 by 2030:

1. Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

2. Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
3. Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

“Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country,” the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. “Prosperous countries depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combating climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in the coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform individual lives, national economies and our world.”

## So how are we making progress?

We know that the workforce's education plays a major part in the economy's performance and growth. According to UNESCO, education generates productivity gains: the increase in the average educational attainment of a country for one year means an annual per capita GDP growth from 2 to 2.5 per cent.

Existing evidence also supports that "the quality of education, measured by the knowledge that students gain as depicted in tests of cognitive skills, is substantially more important for economic growth than the mere quantity of education," Eric A. Hanushek reports.

We are living in a knowledge-based economy where the workforce's intellectual ability is, and should be, treated as an asset worth investment.

There is now a greater need than ever for educational programmes to be regularly refreshed to reflect industry best practice, as well as a need for courses to be affordable, accessible and convenient. IAPCO's approach to education combines a mixture of face-to-face and online learning to accommodate different learning types, geography and resources.

IAPCO supports experienced and novice organisers build and refresh their knowledge to successful bidding for international meetings with key destination, ambassadors and commercial stakeholders.

We adopt a collaborative approach working closely with CVBs and other key destination partners to ensure that EDGE education help destinations attract international meetings by developing a locally skilled infrastructure.

"One of the greatest sessions I've had is learning about how PCOs actually work. Because we are the CVB, we must work with clients, PCOs, suppliers, local hosts and decision makers. Looking at different points of view has been an eye-opener for me," said Dylan Redas Noel, Head of Industry Development at Sarawak Convention Bureau in Malaysia.

"I learned a lot from everyone in the room. It's a whole different perspective. Everyone was participating in a discussion and debating. Everyone's input was just priceless in the room and in the session," said Araya Rungsang, Manager at the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau.

"IAPCO EDGE Seminar is a great opportunity for the delegates who would like to know more about the meeting industry or MICE industry. The knowledge they share is very practical and very useful for us to know more about client communication. I think it's a good concept to remind me as PCOs which we have to think more about the client. We are the platform to connect them together to realise the same goal and vision," said Jakel Lin, Project Manager at GIS Group in Taiwan.

"Durban, South Africa, has become a trending destination for International events. International events and specifically associations events have a huge economic impact on the destination. Moreover, on the knowledge legacy the event brings with it," said Ori Lahav, VP Clients and Operations at Kenes.

Our immediate focus is to develop our portfolio of online education and, by doing so, provide accessible education to build PCO skills for all - particularly for those in emerging regions.

"In today's knowledge-driven economies, access to quality education and the chances for development are two sides of the same coin," Børge Brende, President of the World Economic Forum, said. "All countries, regardless of their national wealth, stand to gain from more and better education."

By providing quality educational content online IAPCO's insights and knowledge can reach a greater audience, helping to substantially increase accessible, affordable education. IAPCO is committed to promoting quality education, furthering our abilities and sharing best practices - leaving no one behind and providing education for all.

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### ABOUT IAPCO: MEETING QUALITY

IAPCO (International Association of Professional Congress Organisers) is the leading international association for professional conference organisers. Its mission is to raise the standards of service among its member organisations and other sectors of the meetings industry through continued education, connection and support. IAPCO represents today 135 companies comprised of over 9100 professional congress organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries.