

Three Legacy Opportunities for Associations in Global Destinations

International professional associations that convene congresses in destinations around the world mustn't miss out on the opportunity to leave a legacy that reflects the values of the association, whether tangible or intangible, social, or economic or environmental.

Three legacy opportunities present themselves to the rotating congresses that are hosted by international professional associations around the world.

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COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT

The first type is a community-engagement legacy in which congress participants make a time donation and take part in an outreach activity which generates a tangible and long-lasting outcome. Examples might be planting a vegetable garden for a seniors' centre, building a playground for a preschool, or constructing a library at a community centre. Participants will have the opportunity to contribute planning and problem-solving as well as elbow grease as they work together toward a result. Engagement with the beneficiaries of the outreach activity is another positive outcome.

This type of engagement can be very inspiring for the participants, and can leave long-lasting positive memories of the congress and destination. It's a "volun-tourism" approach that gives visitors to a destination a chance to interact with local residents that they might not have otherwise been able to meet. The timeframe for planning is short and the budget can be almost entirely dedicated to materials and supplies as the labour will be supplied by the participants. And, most beneficial to the association executive, the activity can be arranged by a congress management service provider in the destination.

CONTENT DRIVEN

The next type is wider reaching, and more content driven, and depends on the nature of the profession that the association represents. Convening a congress in a global destination presents opportunities for expanding the base of congress participation, promoting association membership growth in the host country or region, and strategic linkages with other countries in the region.

The funding model may be based on congress participants being asked to make a voluntary monetary donation during registration, or a portion of the congress budget can be set aside for the intended legacy. Because this legacy is more linked to the nature of the profession that the association represents, the time burden on the association executive will be greater as it is not something that can be outsourced to a congress management company.

Examples range from the establishment of an endowment in a relevant university department to a scholarship for participants from developing economies to attend future congresses. Something as simple as abstract support in which established academics or well-seasoned congress goers assist first-time abstract submitters to craft an abstract

to the congress standards can leave a long-lasting legacy: getting an international congress under his or her belt can significantly impact the career of a young professional.

Making bursaries available to local or regional participants will demonstrate intent to grow the profession as well as create the vehicle for participants who may not have previously had the means to attend an international conference in their field.

Using the host association's members as congress volunteers is another way to share access to content and the association's professionalism.

SKILLS TRANSFER

Finally, a skills transfer or skills development legacy opportunity is available when a congress brings to any destination world experts on a specific topic or skill, whether medical, academic or professional. A mobile clinic in an under-developed facility staffed by leading physicians who treat and train is a possible example, as are special training sessions for students in a particular field.

The type of legacy chosen will depend on many factors, including the objectives and values of the association, the nature of the profession it represents, the location of the congress, and the enthusiasm of members but no matter the choice, both the association and the destination will benefit.

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