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## Managing Stakeholders to Destination Marketing

### Identifying CVB stakeholders

Stakeholders are a crucial and indispensable element of convention bureaus' operations. They are persons (or groups of persons) with direct or indirect interest in the effects of the bureaus' operations. A stakeholder with direct interest may be a convention bureau founder, its members (if the bureau has a membership structure), enterprises which draw direct benefits from convention bureaus operations (hotels, restaurants, attractions), employees of the meetings industry, clients and even competitors. The interests of these persons and organisations in the operations of a particular convention bureau and in the effects of the operations are of a very strong and specific nature.

Stakeholders with an indirect interest are organisations associated in the sector of stakeholders directly influencing the formation of the role and character of convention bureaus. The connection may be very strong, as is the case with service suppliers for the meetings industry, or quite weak, which may be illustrated with the example of the association bringing together owners of houses where the meetings industry employees are accommodated, that is an organisation which is not directly related to a given structure.

Indirect stakeholders are, for instance, organisations which depend on direct stakeholders of convention bureaus for their operation (support industries, such as law, real estate agents, education, audio and visual equipment suppliers); and those which are convention bureaus stakeholders' clients, namely, events participants, clients of tour operators and hotel guests. They indeed are stakeholders as they may have influence

on how direct stakeholders make their decisions. Therefore, a politically active artistic organisation may have impact on the manner in which accommodation tax is distributed via connections its members have with the political body which takes the decisions on financing (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1:** Potential stakeholders of convention bureaus

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### Direct stakeholders

- Industry-related associations (e.g. hotel, restaurant, retail trade)
- Political bodies and sponsors (e.g. city, town, district, state)
- Clients of convention bureaus (e.g. tour operators, meetings planners, head and officers of associations)
- Members – if the convention bureau has a membership structure (e.g. hotels, transportation companies, local touristic enterprises)
- Other convention bureaus operating in geographically close markets
- Social opinion leaders (e.g. chambers of commerce)
- Employees of the industry (trade unions)
- Members of the tourism industry (e.g. tour operators, travel agencies)
- Conferences and meetings planners (including corporate)
- Media
- Meetings ambassadors, congresses ambassadors

### Indirect stakeholders

- Clients of convention bureaus' stakeholders (e.g. events participants, clients of tour operators and hotel guests)
  - Supporting industries, specialists (e.g. lawyers, real estate agents, teachers)
  - Social associations
  - Suppliers of meetings industry stakeholders
  - Other political bodies (e.g. airport or port authorities)
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Delineating the interdependencies between direct and indirect stakeholders and even defining them is not always simple. Persons who today work for competitive convention bureaus may be meetings planners tomorrow and those responsible for corporate sector at a further stage of their professional career may be in charge of meetings for non-profit organisa-

tions or work for a subcontractor. Supporting the local community is the key to the management of all other stakeholders. In a situation where the community is not strongly attached to the role and usefulness of the convention bureau, and its influence on economic stability and social welfare, sponsors are more likely to accept the arguments of others who wish to acquire a part of the profits generated by the meetings industry. The stronger the support for the convention bureau on the part of the community, the greater its ability to keep the means and resources necessary to fulfil its mission.

### The needs of stakeholders

Learning about current stakeholders' needs seems to be the key element which convention bureaus managers should always bear in mind. This should actually be the foundation on which the group influence management is built. The process needs to comprise a few factors, yet the main elements should be:

- ◆ The aspects related to the influence on the allocation of funds, i.e. budget for a given organisation,
- ◆ Analysis of the mission and competitive factors among potential partners,
- ◆ Neutrality, understood as the situation where bureaus do not contribute to efficiency decrease in a given organisation nor do they favour some organisations over others.

Acquiring members, partners or persons (e.g. congress and conference ambassadors) associated in a convention bureau is not only challenging, but also causes numerous problems. In the process of searching for members, one may find different organisations which, when taking into account their character and nature, seem similar or aspire to the same public funds. This is when local conflicts arise. What is indispensable, however, is cooperation, as both organisations most probably may derive profits out of their operations and be complementary to one another.

The convention bureau managers must ensure the correlation of their mission with the mission of their partners. That is why they devote a lot of time to informing hotels, for instance, or conference centres of how they operate, to help them realise their tasks and encourage them to share the information on the added value for a given community with other