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Legacies through Thoughtful Supply Chains

Looking around the world I am continuously amazed by the high standards, innovations, and positive impact our industry can make.

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Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 13,000 association meetings were being held each year in convention centres worldwide (International Congress and Convention Association [ICCA], 2020). Many of these centres were implementing and documenting new practices based on research conducted into attitudes and outcomes associated with sustainability, including research on:

- ❑ The importance of holding meetings at convention centres that incorporate sustainable practices, and the willingness to pay for them (Draper, Dawson & Casey, 2011; Sox *et al.*, 2013; Myung, 2017);
- ❑ Green attitudes of convention centre attendees (Lee *et al.*, 2013);
- ❑ Preference for conferences at venues that make efforts towards sustainability (Buathong & Lai, 2017);
- ❑ Trade show delegates' perceptions and willingness to participate in sustainable practices (Jung *et al.*, 2016);
- ❑ The viability of sourcing local food for meetings and conventions (Lee & Slocum, 2015).

These investigations were a useful starting point for discussion around whether adopting sustainable practices in convention centres would increase demand or delegate satisfaction. Little has been documented in the literature about the potential for convention centres to deliver benefits beyond the venue or event itself (particularly in relation to sustainable food sourcing) and to generate market advantage in so doing.

The International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) case study on 'Feeding Your Performance' (Foley *et al.*, 2017; Foley *et al.*, 2018a), which has been adapted in this chapter, demonstrates how a convention centre's significant purchasing power can be utilised to contribute to sustainability by collaborating with, and supporting suppliers in an agri-fresh, short food supply chain. The ICC Sydney Feeding Your Performance program facilitates sustainable behaviour as part of its organisational practices and supports and collaborates with a range of suppliers who are working to improve the agricultural ecosystems in their farming areas. As is the case with sustainable tourism (Liburd, 2018), sustainable business event delivery is dependent upon the viability of the event and the balancing of industry and environmental impacts.

The case study documents the early outcomes of the initiative; a strategy which has enhanced links between ICC Sydney and the agricultural sector and demonstrated the potential of a convention centre to operate as a catalyst for growth, while delivering multiple benefits to delegates. The outcomes of the initiative are discussed in terms of their value for economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Case study: ICC Sydney: Feeding Your Performance

Business event(s)	The case study was compiled utilising research from a number of business events held at ICC Sydney which embraced the Feeding Your Performance initiative.
Location(s)	Sydney, NSW, Australia
Year(s)	2014 to 2017 (ongoing)
Type of event(s)	This case study relates to an overarching business event delivery strategy applied to numerous events at ICC Sydney.
Event purpose	The initiative aims to utilise local products and services in the provision of business events to maximise legacy outcomes for local producers and small businesses, the host community and event delegates.
Primary event legacy	Regional economic support and development for local producers, small businesses and the host community.
Additional legacies (beyond tourism)	Environmental sustainability, broader community education on healthy eating habits, improved performance of delegates at business events, greater government support, reduced waste production, contribution to charity and diversity promotion.
Summary quote	"We wanted to have a greater economic impact than just room nights and coffee cups," (ICC Sydney CEO).

This case study was adapted from: Foley, C., Edwards, D., Harrison, B. and Hergesell, A. (2019)

Background

ICC Sydney is the largest integrated convention, exhibition and entertainment venue in Australia. It is situated in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), Australia in the active leisure precinct of Darling Harbour. It is flanked by the Sydney Central Business District and a university precinct. It was opened in December 2016 and employs 1300 staff (300 full time and 1000 casuals).

The United Nations' 70th General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (UNWTO, 2015). The goals include making tourism a catalyst for positive change by promoting socially inclusive and sustainable economic growth, including stimulating employment and encouraging resource efficiency and environmental protection (UNWTO, 2017). ICC Sydney is making a contribution to these goals in three key areas: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability. This case study demonstrates how these contributions are providing benefits for multiple stakeholders (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Highlights from ICC Sydney's Feeding Your Performance initiative

Environmentally sustainable practices
Supports local producers and aligns with the NSW government's sustainability strategies; reduces food miles, has a smaller carbon footprint and improves efficiencies; has a focus on recycling, reduced use of chemicals, reduced waste, and effective waste management.
Knowledge sharing
Endorses CSR and stewardship; they are innovative in their aim for restaurant-quality nutritionally balanced meals; includes creative menus and support for new produce.
Economic development
Supports local producers and regional development; provides demand for seasonal fresh produce that counters market volatility inherent in the food industry; further economic growth is anticipated via business expansion, regional growth and tourism.
Social contributions
Encourages awareness of and concerns for farmers and local communities; supports farmers to grow high-quality produce, and new and specialty produce; supports local and diverse communities; nourishes delegates' physical and mental performance via healthy nutritious food.

Theoretical and environmental context

Environmental sustainability is concerned with reducing negative human impact and supporting healthy ecosystems necessary for the survival of humans and other organisms (Liburd & Edwards, 2010). ICC Sydney engages in environmentally sustainable behaviour as part of its organisational practices and supports a range of suppliers who are working to improve ecosystems. Key initiatives for environmental sustainability in the agricultural sector in Australia are reducing use of agri-chemicals, managing water scarcity, and maintaining biodiversity (Australian Government, 2009).