



# **Collecting Club Event Guide**

## **Working with CVBs**

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# Table of Contents

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|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>What IS A CVB?</b> .....                                   | <b>1</b> |
| Working with CVBs .....                                       | 1        |
| Size Doesn't Matter .....                                     | 1        |
| Traveler Accessibility .....                                  | 1        |
| Check Your Dates.....   | 2        |
| <b>What You Should Provide a CVB</b> .....                    | <b>2</b> |
| <b>What a CVB Can Do for You</b> .....                        | <b>3</b> |
| Pre-Planning Assistance.....                                  | 3        |
| Site Inspections and Presentations .....                      | 3        |
| Proposals .....   | 3        |
| Hotel Room Blocks.....  | 3        |
| Attendance Builders .....                                     | 3        |
| Itinerary Planning .....                                      | 3        |
| Publicity.....  | 4        |
| Welcome Letters and Official Welcome .....                    | 4        |
| Name Badges .....   | 4        |
| Information on Host City.....                                 | 4        |
| Hospitality Table or Exhibit .....                            | 4        |
| Airport Volunteers .....                                      | 4        |
| On-Site Meeting Assistance .....                              | 4        |
| <b>Event Facilities</b> .....                                 | <b>5</b> |
| HOST CONVENTION HOTELS.....                                   | 5        |
| CONFERENCE OR TRADE CENTERS, FIELDHOUSES, FAIRGROUNDS.....    | 5        |
| <b>Site Inspections</b> .....                                 | <b>5</b> |
| <b>How to Contact Convention &amp; Visitors Bureaus</b> ..... | <b>6</b> |

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## What IS A CVB?

*Convention & Visitor Bureaus, or CVBs, are not-for-profit organizations with two very important roles. First, they strive to bring as much convention, conference, and tourist business to their city or area as they possibly can. And, secondly, they provide unbiased information about the services and facilities of your destination. Most services provided by CVBs cost nothing. CVBs are usually membership organizations composed of businesses that rely on tourism and meetings or conventions for revenue.*

## Working with CVBs

The purpose of this guide is to help the leadership of collecting clubs, associations and societies better understand the role that CVBs can play in making your conventions, conferences, shows or other events successful.

It is the responsibility of a CVB to "know" their city or area, the options available for a convention chairman or show manager, and to serve as a "broker" or an official point of contact for event planners. It is the role of the CVB to provide the full range of information about their city or area. They not only save the convention chairman or show manager time and energy, but can often provide the guidance which avoids missteps or costly mistakes.

## Size Doesn't Matter

Now, you may be thinking "*I'm a small club and CVBs won't be interested in our annual convention*". More than half of all meetings in which CVBs provide assistance involve less than 200 people. These meetings are just as important to a CVB as larger ones, and many bureaus have staffs that are specifically dedicated to small meetings. Additionally, a number of CVBs now have a staff person who has collecting groups as part of their responsibility.

## Traveler Accessibility

Selecting a host city for your collecting group's next convention or show is a very important decision. A city may have a lot of things to offer, but may not "be right" for other reasons.

An important factor rests with your members, themselves. How many are willing to fly, versus driving?

For those that prefer to fly, you need answers to the following:

- \=What airlines service the nearest airport?
- \=How many flights a day and from what cities?
- \=Are they cities that serve your members?
- \=Is the airport convenient to the event site or facility?
- \=Are there complimentary shuttle vans to/from the airport?

If you have members driving, the questions become:

- \=How convenient is the host city relating to the Interstate Highway System?
- \=What percent of your members live within 100 miles of the selected host city? ... 300 miles? ... 500 miles?
- \=Does the host hotel have ample parking for their guests; particularly for large vans if your convention also includes a show?
- \=Is parking free to guests or is there a charge, and if so, how much?
- \=Is there porter/valet service to help transport merchandise/display equipment?

Another important part of accessibility relates to availability of sleeping accommodations. Having a convention in an ocean-side beach town at the height of the tourist season is probably not a good idea to even consider. Cities that have a huge weekend tourist trade, such as Las Vegas or Atlantic City, will have high room rates for Friday and Saturday nights, but for a mid-week convention or show, the room rates may be fantastic! On the reverse side, a major business city that has many hotel room rentals from Monday through Thursday, may have economical rooms available for weekend events.

## Check Your Dates.

If you have determined your host city site and are looking at selecting dates, another thing to ask is whether or not there are any other events being held during the same period as your convention or show. If it is an interesting festival, fair, concert or circus, etc., it might be something your attendees would be interested in experiencing. However, if it means that hotel rooms will be scarce, restaurants will be crowded and the city streets jammed with traffic, then it may be a catastrophe for your event. Ask the CVB to check your proposed dates against any other events in town. Ask the CVB representative what other conventions are also scheduled at the same period.

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## What You Should Provide a CVB

If you are considering a particular host city for a future convention, show or other event, the first call you should make is to the city's Convention & Visitors Bureau.

They will need to know as much as possible about your group and your expectations. If you have any reports from past convention or show chairmen which can be shared, this would be helpful.

Other information that needs to be provided includes:

- \= Club contact information, including name, postal address, *E-Mail address* and telephone number.
- \= Preferred dates of your event. *Always* include alternate dates.
- \= Budget
- \= Approximate number of persons attending, including members, family members, guest, etc.
- \= Are attendees mostly club members (collectors), or do a large number of spouses and family members also attend?
- \= Arrival and departure days.
- \= Estimated number of guest rooms needed per night.
- \= Space requirements:
  - o Meeting room needs: room set up and size of meeting rooms.
  - o Reception/break rooms: Do you want coffee and danish available in the morning or cookies and soft drinks in the afternoon?
- \= Planned food and beverage functions, such as sit-down or buffet receptions, lunches or dinners.
- \= If it is a convention, what type of events are being considered, such as workshops, seminars, banquets and other meal events, show or bourse, exhibits, auction, entertainment.
- \= Audio/Visual needs, such as projectors, special lighting or other technical requirements.
- \= Security needs - show or bourse, auction, exhibits.
- \= Will any events be open to the public?
- \= Does your event include "room-hopping"?
- \= Will you need to provide for display case rentals?
- \= Coordination of local tours/field trips.
- \= Proposal due date and response date.

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## **What a CVB Can Do for You**

The desire every collecting club or association has, is to host a successful event that those attending will fondly remember and talk about for a long time. The careful attention to every detail... and, how to function if something unplanned happens... is often what can make the difference.

This is where the assistance and help of the local Convention & Visitors Bureau is your best friend.

Most collecting groups are volunteer-driven. Very few have professional convention coordinators on staff. Volunteers are super assets to a collecting club, and it is great when they take on the challenge of the annual convention, a show or any other event. Make sure they are provided with the very best, highly-trained support that will make your convention or show a success... and your volunteers successful.

### **Pre-Planning Assistance**

A CVB representative will take the time to learn your plans, suggest services and resources, and help orchestrate the event needs.

### **Site Inspections and Presentations**

A CVB representative will be pleased to give your club's designated representative(s) a tour of local hotels, meeting & exhibit facilities and attractions. They can make suggestions, open doors of opportunity, and introduce your club's representative to potential partners at hotels, meeting facilities, restaurants and other opportunities. It may be possible for the CVB representative to make a formal bid presentation to your board or membership.

### **Proposals**

After learning what your needs are for a convention or show, a CVB representative can assist in customizing a proposal for your group to include all of your meeting requirements, and distribute the proposal to suitable hotel and conference establishments in their area.

### **Hotel Room Blocks**

CVBs keep very careful track of room counts, as well as other meetings coming to the area. In this way, they can help planners avoid conflicts with other events. CVBs have first-hand familiarity with the hotels and with meeting space in the area. They can help event planners match facilities to specific meeting requirements and budget.

### **Attendance Builders**

The CVB staff will become an integral part of your planning process. This might possibly include a CVB staff person making a presentation to your board meeting, or perhaps even attending your convention one year in advance to experience firsthand how your convention operates and then suggest creative ideas for hosting your convention the following year. They can provide collateral materials such as Videos, CDV's, photos, maps, and brochures for use with your membership.

Explain to your CVB representative what the club has done in the past to get the members to conventions or shows. Solicit their advise on tools they might be able to provide that will insure that attendance targets are not only met, but will be surpassed.

### **Itinerary Planning**

Single or multiple-day tour itineraries, off-site activities for members, for spouses, or for families. Also, pre-convention and post-convention activities. This can include transportation, tickets, sightseeing tour guides.

You know your group better than anyone else. No matter whether the interests of members, or spouses, or their kids, relate to shopping or antiquing, golf or museums, walking tours or sports, let your CVB representative know their interests and find out what is available.

### **Publicity**

Many CVBs offer assistance with your public relations efforts by providing a variety of materials, including photos and media lists, and help by promoting your event to local media. For some CVBs, the event must be open to the public and have wide public appeal for publicity assistance.

### **Welcome Letters and Official Welcome**

The CVB can provide your convention chairman with welcome letters for inclusion in your convention program or registration materials. Depending upon the size of your event, and your desire, the CVB may possibly be able to provide a representative from the City to bring your group an official welcome.

### **Name Badges**

Your CVB may offer to produce name badges for your event, including printing the name badges and having them ready on the day your event starts. Badges can be designed to your specifications, complete with the club logo. Usually your group will only be charged for the cost of the badges.

### **Information on Host City**

CVBs can provide your group with the most complete and accurate planning information including museums and galleries and other highlights. In your initial plan, which you will share with the CVB representative, make sure you fully cover the interests of your members so the representative can offer opportunities appropriate to your event participants. There may be museums or tours that specifically relate to your collecting area. They can also possibly recommend local guest speakers and other local programming options for your consideration, which can be a savings on your budget.

### **Hospitality Table or Exhibit**

CVBs are happy to provide local information for conventioneer packets but another option which may be available is a hospitality table or exhibit including visitor maps of the city, nearby restaurants and nightlife entertainment, group dining, tour suggestions and other services.

Some CVBs are willing to negotiate special discounts or savings certificates to establishments near your host facility such as restaurants, entertainment, transportation or attractions.

### **Airport Volunteers**

If you are hosting a large convention or show, the local CVB may have staff or volunteers located at the information desk at the airport to assist incoming members.

### **On-Site Meeting Assistance**

Particularly if you are hosting a large event, CVBs may be able to offer registration assistance during peak registration periods to facilitate the check-in procedures and to answer any questions from attendees.

The CVB can direct you to local vendors and suppliers in the city who can provide essential services and products for your convention or show before the event, or while it is in progress.

**The professionals at every Convention & Visitors Bureau know that their jobs aren't done until you go home satisfied. Their goal - to make your convention chairman a hero and your club's return to their destination a tradition.**

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## Event Facilities

Events hosted by collecting clubs and associations vary greatly in every way, and the selection of facilities is no exception. From luxury hotels and resorts to convention centers, university campuses and state & county fairgrounds, firehouses, Elk's Club lodges and community parks - they are all used, depending upon the needs of the group and the purpose of the event.

### HOST CONVENTION HOTELS

For club conventions, the selection of the host hotel is critical. Know your convention needs and the needs of your attendees. Usually there are several specific areas of need with most club conventions.

**Location** - Is the hotel easy to find? Is it near restaurants and other attractions? Is there ample hotel guest parking?

**Bedrooms** - What types of sleeping accommodations are needed or desired? Make sure you visit the various types of rooms and suites offered to make sure they are satisfactory. If your convention is primarily just for members, room requirements may be entirely different than if a large number of your members bring along their families. If your convention traditionally includes "room hopping" this, too, can be a factor with bedroom accommodations.

**Restaurants and other Guest Amenities** - Does the hotel have satisfactory meal accommodations for your attendees? What are their hours of service? Variety of menu. Cost. Other attractions: pool, fitness center, business center, lounge or bar.

**Meeting Rooms** - How many? size... occupancy for classroom, theatre or other arrangements. Appropriate lighting, A/V and sound system.

**Banquet Facilities** - This is usually a key event of your convention. What are the options for making it memorable - location, menu, services, cost.

**Show, Bourse or Exhibit Area** - Space requirements for this portion of the convention often "drives" the decision on which facility is selected. Is the space ample? Easily acceptable? Secure? Well lighted? does it serve your needs?

**Overall hotel layout** - Are the rooms you will be using in close proximity to each other? Is the hotel elevator system "guest friendly?" If your group has "room hopping," will the hotel place most of your members' rooms in a block, or will they be scattered throughout the hotel?

Are there any planned hotel construction or refurbishing for the time of your visit?

### CONFERENCE OR TRADE CENTERS, FIELDHOUSES, FAIRGROUNDS

If the club event you are planning is a larger show, it may be held within a hotel facility, or a specific facility more receptive to shows such as a conference center or arena. The check list offered below can help in the decision-making for these facilities, as well as for hotels.

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## Site Inspections

Most CVBs may have their own inspection checklists that they will share with you. We have included a checklist that may include some areas you have not thought about, and which may not be on their listing. Highlight those items that pertain to your own event so you can discuss them with your CVB representative, as well as the hotel or conference center staff. Many of these points relate to larger show facilities, but may still be relevant to smaller events.

## Get it in Writing

As a convention chairman or show coordinator, always have a contract, and review it carefully before signing. Feel completely free to add an extra page if there needs to be clarification.

Request an itemized list of all costs. Don't be bashful about asking questions, such as how extra hours are billed or about any local ordinances with which you may not be familiar. Your CVB representative should work with you on these important negotiations and decisions.

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## How to Contact Convention & Visitors Bureaus

Check out the CVB booths in the Convention Sites/Host Cities aisle of the virtual Collectors Trade Show on the Association of Collecting Clubs' website - <http://tradeshow.collectors.org> **These are some of** the CVBs particularly interested in working with collecting clubs - welcoming you to their city and anxious to make your next event a success. ACC also maintains a large file of material on CVBs and can possibly assist you or offer direction.

Visit the Profile of Convention & Visitors Bureaus - <http://www.destinationmarketing.org> - for information on CVBs.

The website <http://www.OfficialTravelGuide.com> offers a listing of CVBs around the world, along with contacts and hyperlinks to more than 1200 local CVB websites.

You can "broadcast" your desire to select a convention site by using the Online RFP/Proposal System offered through the Destination Marketing Association International. <http://www.destinationmarketing.org> This free service allows you to place your meeting RFP in the hands of CVBs in their network.

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This ***Collecting Club Event Guide - Working with CVBs*** was produced by the Association of Collecting Clubs. For more information on the Association of Collecting clubs, please contact us...

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