

An aerial photograph of Chicago, Illinois, showing the city skyline along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The image is darkened to serve as a background for the text. The skyline includes numerous skyscrapers, with the Willis Tower being a prominent feature. In the foreground, there is a park area with green trees and a road with cars. A large body of water, Lake Michigan, is visible on the left side of the image. The sky is filled with large, white clouds.

CHICAGO
CHOOSE CHICAGO

Attendee Acquisition Roundtable July 24, 2025

Unlocking the Power of
Destination Partnerships



CHICAGO

CHOOSE CHICAGO

The Challenge

- Attendee acquisition is more complex than ever
- Economic uncertainty, shifting behaviors, and geopolitical headwinds
- Destination partners can help — if engaged early



The Missing **Seat** at the Table

- Marketing and content teams often excluded from destination decisions
- These teams understand the audience best
- Destination is a strategic lever for attracting the right attendees



The Strategic Role of Convention & Visitor's Bureau's (CVBs)

- CVBs offer more than logistic support — they are strategic collaborators
- Provide local knowledge, networks, and marketing support
- Must be engaged early in the planning process

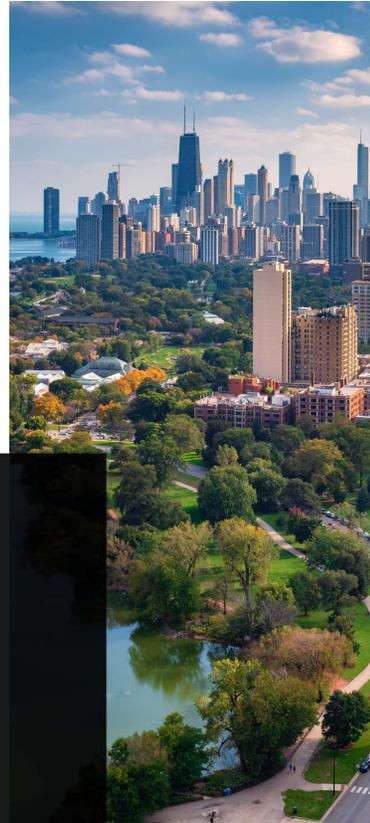


Leveraging Local Intellectual Capital

- Connect with local industry experts and [speakers](#)
- Engage students and young professionals
- CVBs can facilitate these connections

Spotlight on Chicago – Students & Innovation

- 70+ colleges, universities & vocational schools
- 220,000+ students
- Partnership with America's Urban Campus enables engagement



Thinking Outside the Box

- Mentorship lounges, student pitch competitions, innovation tours
- These experiences attract and retain attendees
- CVBs can help design and implement these ideas





Geopolitical Headwinds

- Visa delays, travel advisories, safety concerns
- 15.2% drop in international travel to U.S. events

Source: Maritz, *2024 Special IMEX Industry Trends Report*, via Trade Show Executive, <https://tradeshowexecutive.com>

CHICAGO
CHOOSE CHICAGO

Strategic Responses to Global Challenges

- Identify alternative international and/or expanded domestic markets
- Communicate visa support and safety early
- Consider travel or registration sponsorship



A dark, atmospheric photograph of the Chicago skyline at dusk or dawn. The buildings are silhouetted against a dim sky, with some windows glowing. The overall tone is moody and professional.

Actionable Strategies

01 Involve marketing and content teams early

02 Engage CVBs as strategic partners

03 Collaborate on outreach and local engagement



Key Takeaways



Attendee Acquisition is a team effort



CVB + internal teams = strategic advantage



Early collaboration leads to better outcomes

Q&A + Let's Connect

Mallory Yepez

Phone [312-919-4268](tel:312-919-4268)

Email myepez@choosechicago.com