

Site Selection Considerations

The destination

Accessibility

- Ease and cost
- Proximity to airport
- Permits access by people with disabilities
- Adequate taxi/limousine service
- Sufficient parking space
- Availability and cost of shuttle service
- Adequate airport assistance
- Adequate number of flights into destination
- Seasonality of destination (peak season vs. off-season)

Environment

- Availability of local attractions
- Shopping
- Recreation
- Restaurants
- Weather conditions
- Appearance
- Safety of area
- Economic health of community
- Reputation of area/facility for hosting meetings
- Support and services available from local convention bureau
- Availability of experienced suppliers, such as audiovisual firms, exhibit service contractors, temporary help, and security

The facility

- Efficient, friendly doormen and bellmen
- Attractive, clean lobby
- Registration desk easy to find: sufficient space and personnel in relation to guest rooms; ability to handle peak check-in/check-out times for major groups; efficient front desk personnel
- Modern elevators in sufficient number to serve guests when the facility is full
- Accessible, fully-staffed message and information desk: rapid response to telephone calls; quick delivery of messages
- Availability of guest services: drugstores, banks, emergency services, giftshop, concierge, safety deposit boxes
- Comfortable clean rooms: furniture in good condition, modern bathroom fixtures, adequate lighting, adequate closet space and hangers, smoke detectors, fire exit information clearly posted
- Refrigerator and/or wet bar
- Adequate lighting and cleanliness of hallways
- Availability of beverage and ice machines on each floor
- Service elevator accessibility
- Size of standard room vs. deluxe room
- Availability of “towers” or executive floor offering special guest services
- Rooms equipped for people with disabilities
- Number and types of suites and availability of suite floor plans
- Reservation procedures and policies
- Room category classifications (floor number, ocean view, etc.) and number available in each category
- Number of rooms available for early arrivals and late departures
- Current group rate and rack rate for individual guests (not part of the group)
- Date hotel will provide firm rates
- Guarantee and deposit requirements

- Check-in and check-out hours
- Cutoff date for the room block
- Check-cashing policies and types of credit cards accepted
- Refund policy for cancellations
- Dates of any planned renovations
- Any change in hotel ownership being discussed
- Availability of a health club, hours, and cost
- Telephone access charges (long distance, local, and calling card)
- Key system for guest rooms
- Adequate parking space (free or for a fee)
- Hotel emergency plan (meeting manager should review it)
- Hotel emergency exits clearly marked
- Comparison of king-bedded versus double-bedded room categories

Meeting space

Meeting rooms come in all shapes and sizes and with a number of obstructions and inadequacies. The meeting manager must evaluate the potential of each room under consideration. They should measure the room, prepare scale diagrams, incorporate all equipment, staging and decorations, and calculate the desired square footage per person for the required setup. Below are some questions the meeting manager should be prepared to answer before the site inspection:

- How many meeting rooms will be required?
- In addition to the formal program, will meeting rooms be needed for committee and business meetings?
- What is the estimated attendance for each session?
- How are attendees to be seated? (Theater style, classroom style, conference style, U-shape, hollow square, crescent rounds, etc.)
- Are rooms with high ceilings and no columns or obstructions needed to accommodate audiovisual presentations?
- Is space needed in or near the meeting room(s) for refreshment breaks?
- What pre- and post-meeting space is required for affiliated ancillary groups?
- Are meeting rooms accessible to people with disabilities?

Food and beverage service

Public outlets

- Appearance and cleanliness
- Cleanliness of food preparation areas
- Adequate staffing at peak times
- Attitude of personnel
- Prompt and efficient service
- Variety of menus
- Cost range
- Reservations policy
- Feasibility of setting up additional food outlets for continental breakfast and quick luncheon service if necessary
- Feasibility of using public food outlets for group functions during non-peak hours
- Room service: diversity of menu, prompt and efficient telephone manner, prompt delivery, quality

Group functions

- Quality and service
- Diversity and creativity of menus
- Costs: tax and gratuities; projected price increase by the time of the meeting; extra labor charges for small group functions
- Liquor laws (restricted times)

- Cash bar policies: bartender cost and minimum hours, cashier charges, drink prices
- Refreshment break pricing: guarantee policies, when a guarantee is required, number prepared beyond guarantee
- Special services: tailored menus, theme parties, unique refreshment breaks, food substitutions available, table decorations, dance floor
- Size of banquet rounds (8 people or 10 people)

Exhibit space

- Number of loading docks and proximity to exhibit area
- Availability and location of freight receiving area
- Location of utilities
- Maximum floor load
- Security of area
- Location of fire exits
- Proximity to food service areas, restrooms, and telephones
- Availability of sufficient time for move-in and move-out
- Reputation of facility regarding union relations
- Decorations to enhance facility appearance
- Availability of supplemental lighting
- Proximity of exhibit hall to other portions of the meeting
- First aid station
- Availability of office space for exposition manager, service contractors, and suppliers
- Crate storage areas and policies
- Available power

Offices and other services

- Sufficient space for furniture and equipment necessary to perform the business at hand
- Good lighting
- Easy for attendees to locate
- Adequate electrical outlets
- Availability of house telephones or telephone jacks
- Ability to secure space after hours
- Is the hotel flexible regarding the tentative agenda, or is meeting space locked in by a signed contract?
- Are doors to meeting rooms wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs?

Equipment

- Tables: six feet long, eight feet long, schoolroom width (15"-18"), rounds, 60 inches, 72 inches
- Chairs
- Condition of banquet food & beverage equipment