YOUR

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
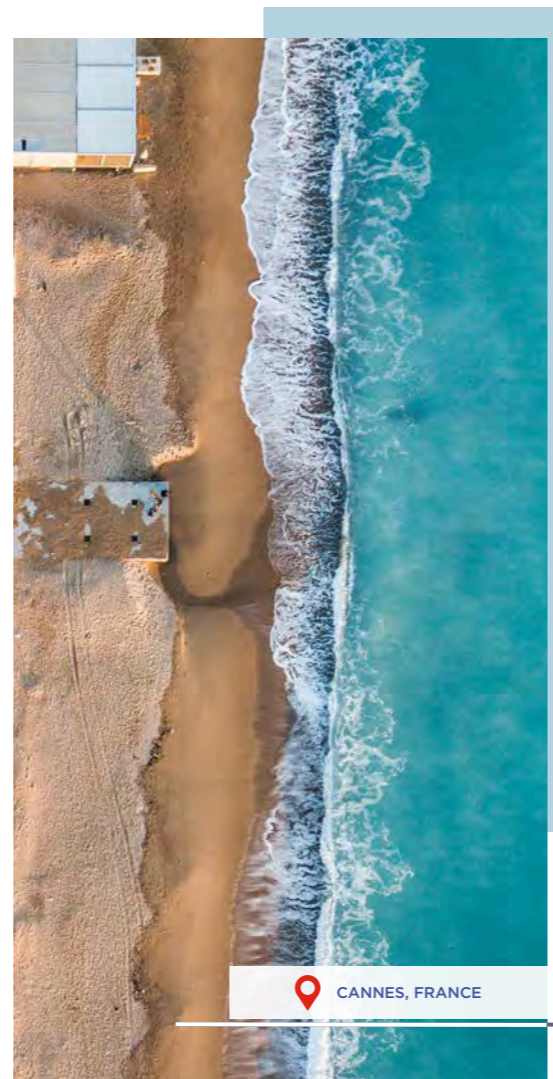# MULTI-CITY
HYBRID EVENTS

HYBRID
CITY ALLIANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis greatly accelerated so many trends that were already underway. For example, organizations learned that remote work really can work, employees have found that they enjoy working remotely some or all of the time, and new technologies have been developed and will continue to be developed that make remote collaboration easier and easier.

As the world slowly opens up again, businesses and event planners are exploring how conferences, congresses, and meetings can best serve this global post-lock down world. One thing is sure, the business world is not going to return to how it was pre-pandemic with a default to in-person meeting for everything. A 50 person participant poll in a March 2021 workshop for event planners held by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) indicated that 69% of the participants thought that the number of hybrid events would increase going forward, 21% indicated that they thought it would stay the same, and 3% said it would decrease.

The Alliance has taken this opportunity to explore ways in which Multi-City Hybrid Events (hub and spoke events being one type of Multi-City Hybrid Events) can offer a solution.

The Alliance is an alliance of fifteen cities convention bureaus who are working together to serve meeting and event professionals along with organizers, meeting planners, associations, and corporate entities: The Alliance is growing, but currently the seventeen cities are*:

Australia:	Business Events Sydney
Belgium:	Antwerp Convention Bureau
Canada:	Ottawa Tourism Business Events
	Edmonton Convention Bureau
	Tourism Winnipeg
Czech Republic:	Prague Convention Bureau
Costa Rica:	Costa Rica Convention Bureau
Ecuador:	Quito Convention Bureau
France:	Cannes Convention Bureau
Japan:	Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Center
Switzerland:	Geneva Convention Bureau
	Lausanne Montreux Convention Bureau
	Zurich Convention Bureau
South-Africa:	Durban KwaZulu Natal Convention Bureau
South-Korea:	Seoul Convention Bureau
The Netherlands:	The Hague Convention Bureau
United Kingdom:	Liverpool Convention Bureau

*May 2021

CANNES, FRANCE

THE MISSION

is to connect the world through hybrid/-multi-city events by providing access to knowledge, innovations, networks, and markets. The Alliance is here to help event planners and can facilitate the transition to post-pandemic event planning. More information on the Alliance can be found at:

www.hybridcityalliance.org

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

PRAGUE, CHECH REPUBLIC

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

As such, they convened four global workshops in January and February 2021 with Congress Organizers, Convention Bureaus, and Suppliers such as hotels and AV companies. This resulting paper discusses the challenges and some potential solutions discussed in these meetings for Multi-City Hybrid Events. This paper grouped these discussions along three dimensions: Design, Sustainability, and Risk.

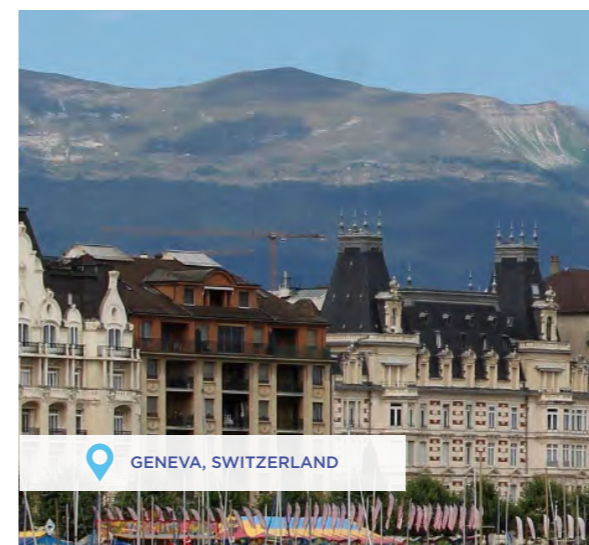ALLIANCE LAUNCH, THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS

DESIGN

Designing an Multi-City Hybrid Event is not the same as designing an in-person event in one city. Online and secondary locations can not just be an afterthought but must be a part of the design from the first moment. This includes designing the content, the networking, and the costs.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is becoming more important to sponsors, delegates, and organizers. Multi-City Hybrid Events, when designed for sustainability, can potentially increase the eco-friendliness of traditional events.

RISK

Nothing in this world is without risk. Multi-City Hybrid Events have a different risk profile than a traditional event and these must be planned for.

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

This White Paper also contains some case studies of organizations experimenting with Multi-City Hybrid Events. Some of the case studies are clients of The Alliance while others are not. This was done to give as balanced a perspective as possible.

DEFINING MULTI-CITY HYBRID EVENTS

QUITO, ECUADOR

HOW TO CHOOSE?

Hybrid

While many definitions of a hybrid event exist, for this paper, it is defined as an event with an in-person and online component. This does lead to a wide range of possibilities including (but not limited to):

In-person and virtual event combined at the same time:

A global event can happen during a set period of time with both virtual and in-person components. Delegates can choose to attend either in-person, virtually, or both.

With the world opening back up, event organizers now have more tools in their toolbelt when planning meetings: in-person, hybrid, and Multi-City Hybrid Event. The decision of which to choose should depend upon what would best serve the event's delegates and the objective of the event.

In trying to determine which type of event to hold, some questions event organizers may want to ask themselves include:

Virtual event first and then an in-person event:

Delegates can attend a virtual event in order to meet other delegates and get preliminary content. A subsequent in-person event can allow delegates to deepen connections that they made online and really drive the content forward with discussion and interaction.

In-person first and then a virtual event:

The preliminary in-person event can be a VIP event with a smaller number of people. The subsequent virtual event is for a wider audience and broadcasts some of the content developed at the in-person VIP event. This helps increase the reach and the revenue generated from the in-person event.

Many preconceptions exist in the event planning space, such as networking works better in-person or collaboration doesn't work as well online. However, the past year has shown that these generalizations are not necessarily true. Organizations that work with, for example, millennials and in the tech industry have been defaulting to remote collaboration and work for a while now quite successfully and have no intention of going back. As William Gibson said, "The future is already here - it's just not evenly distributed." The issue for the more mainstream audiences may therefore be more an issue of organizer mindsets, facilitation skills, and delegate preferences and not a question of whether or not online networking can be effective.

1 Is the audience going to thrive in an on-line or in-person environment?

2 What local impact is required?

3 How dispersed geographically is the audience?

4 What is the importance of delegates' ability to touch physical objects?
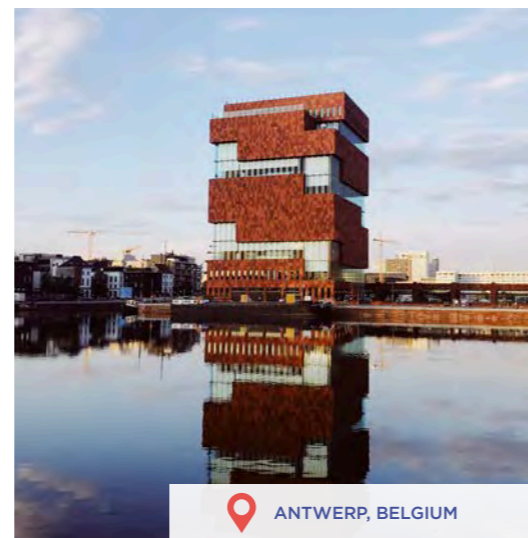
ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

Multi-City

While many definitions of a hybrid event exist, for this paper, it is defined as an event with an in-person and online component. This does lead to a wide range of possibilities including (but not limited to):

The good news about a Multi-City Hybrid Event is that it can cater for audiences that prefer in-person and audiences that prefer virtual in an equally good fashion. A Multi-City Hybrid Event allows all participants to equally benefit from the offerings of the event, in their own fashion, in a manner which best fits their own style of connection.

DESIGN

The days of just adding a webcast to an in-person event and calling it hybrid are rapidly ending. Today's hybrid events (and indeed Multi-City Hybrid Event) need to be designed from the ground up as an Multi-City Hybrid Event to succeed. Each location, including virtual, needs to have an experience designed for the delegates at that location. The experiences do not need to be identical. In fact, this is impossible. However, it is still one event, just one event with multiple experiences. The sum total of all these experiences must build up to one overall target goal or vision even as the complexity scales. To achieve this, participants in the Co-Creation sessions discussed three design issues: content, networking, and costs.

ANTWERP, BELGIUM

1 Design a content experience for each location, including virtual.

In designing sessions for an Multi-City Hybrid Event, event organizers need to ensure, among other things, the following:

Content is created with the distribution channels in mind:

Virtual and physically-present delegates absorb content differently. For example, onsite delegates tend to want to attend more sessions to see speakers that they have potentially travelled to hear.   And virtual attendees will likely have a shorter attention span being in front of a computer. Additionally, some facilitators may be better in person than they are virtually.

CASE STUDY

Josh Seiden and Jeff Gothelf are best-selling authors who also run workshops, usually held as either a part of a conference or as a side-car event to a conference. Their workshop has historically contained lectures, group activities, and individual activities. In the fall of 2019, they experimented with an online version. They initially shifted their two day in-person version of the workshop to four online sessions of three hours each. But, they found that the lectures were not really working in this format. Participants did not look as engaged. So, they shortened and recorded the lectures and gave them to the participants as homework on their own time. This allowed them to shorten the class time from three hours down to two hours, greatly reducing "zoom fatigue." And they found that they have pretty high compliance rates for watching the material. It also means that the time together was now 100% dedicated to interactive activities, what group events are best for. As a result, the workshop feels higher energy, it gets great reviews, participants recommend the workshop, and corporate clients repurchase it.

EDMONTON, CANADA

Content for each location should be relevant for delegates at that location, including virtual:

Event organizers must develop an experience for the delegates of that experience. If a session deals with, for example, regulations in the local market, perhaps delegates in different locations will need different content. Additionally, the days of a live event happening in one physical location and virtual delegates being able to only watch a poorly-produced webcast version of the event and not fully participate are over.

Touch points are created to weave the multiple locations together:

To create one overarching event, event planners should include touch-points during the day to bring people together. For example, a virtual quiz or poll that everyone participates in is a great way to build group cohesion and delegate participation. Food and beverage provide another opportunity to coordinate across locations, either by sending virtual participants a "lunch box" or by creating interactive touch points during the break for networking (e.g. happy hour).

The experience at an in-person location justifies the travel:

Event planners need to shift their mindset from just having delegates listen to speakers to one of enabling delegates to make a difference with the content. For example, physical locations need to clearly define and build for the benefits of bringing delegates to the city. For example, events can connect delegates to local institutions where groundbreaking research is happening or connect delegates to politicians or to the public to discuss policy issues. Convention Boards have relationships in each city to help facilitate these sorts of connections.

The event takes advantage of having multiple locations:

Multiple locations can bring in more delegates from a diversity of locations who can contribute new perspectives. For example, since moving to hybrid or online events, some event planners have seen more delegates from lower and middle income countries coming. To encourage this, some even do price tiering based on World Bank country income. Also, multiple locations and a wider audience reach can increase access to high quality speakers who may no longer need to travel or are attracted by the larger reach for their message. Finally, multiple locations can each contribute to the program with regional context and programming.

Design for a multi time-zone friendly experience:

If the Multi-City Hybrid Event event is across multiple time zones, this adds in yet another layer of complexity. Some event organizers may choose to have one block of time for the locations to come together that works for all the time zones and then, for the rest of the day, each location have its own programming. Other event organizers may choose to have the event spread out over multiple days with portions of the program being virtual/on-demand. That way, delegates can drop in at their convenience and fit the event in better with their daily rhythm. Additionally, some event organizers are breaking the days into smaller pieces as, with multiple physical locations, more delegates can be local and come by e.g. for an afternoon on Monday and then a morning on Wednesday.

WINNIPEG, CANADA

CASE STUDY

The 2020 International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) Congress was one of the first Multi-City Hub Events (a global hub and spoke event), taking place in November 2020 during the midst of the pandemic. It had a main location in Kaohsiung, along with 8 hubs across the globe, most of it being in person event which brought the ICCA community face to face. While the small central organizing committee had final programming approval, each of the hubs took ownership of the local experience. With this, creativity blossomed, improving the overall experience

Normally, the Danish sponsor one keynote speaker. Instead, for this Multi-City Hybrid Event the local team planned three speakers doing a shorter TED-style talk as online attention spans tend to be shorter. Each speaker spoke from a landmark place in Copenhagen, bringing the country of Denmark itself into the presentation.

The Cape Town, South Africa team made a song and had people from all facets of the event dance for it. The resulting song and dance was seen as bringing a powerful and touching message to the event.
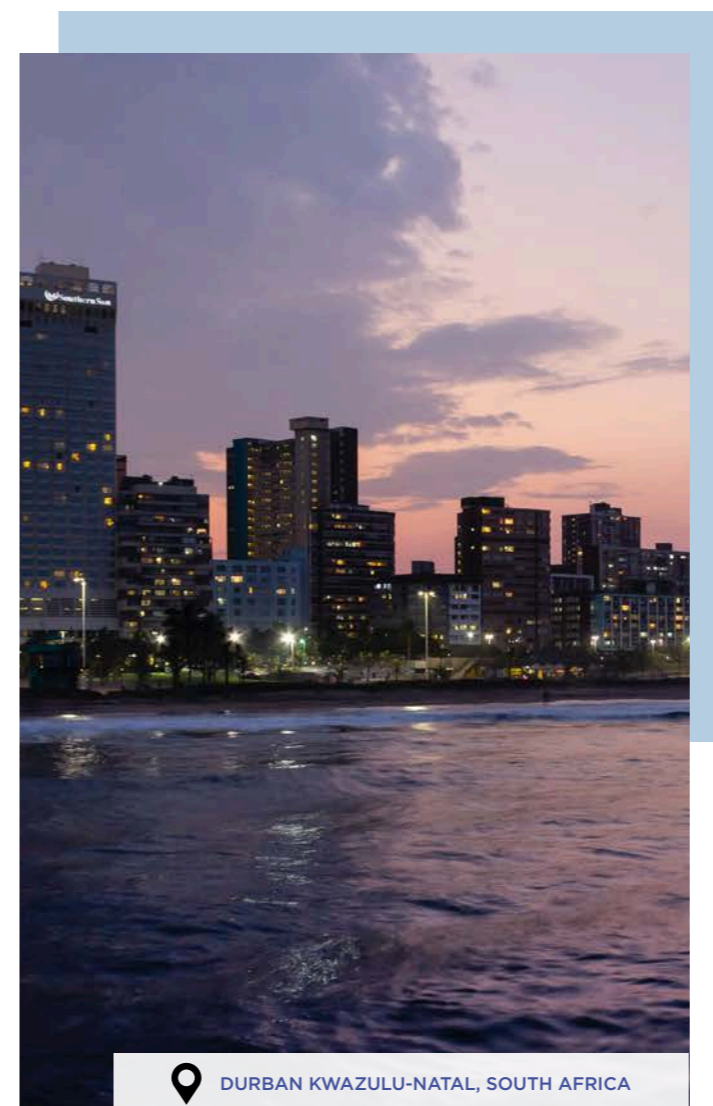
The Luxembourg team did online quizzes for the breaks where they had pictures of Luxembourg and delegates had to spot a mistake. Then the Luxembourg team would tell a story about the photo.

The Kaohsiung team created an ICCA song with everyone in the audience. Delegates could vote which line they liked and this became part of the song.

Each hub wanted to contribute something unique and differentiating. The role of the central team was to enable the local teams to run while ensuring everything contributed to one overall experience, not competing experiences. For more information on this event, please see here.

DURBAN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

2 Design a networking experience for each location, including virtual.

Networking is an incredible benefit of an event. It kickstarts conversations, gives attendees a mental break, gives attendees an opportunity to engage with content, improves the delegate experience, and provides an opportunity for attendees to engage with sponsors and exhibitors.

Event planners need to design for great networking interactions and not leave it to chance. To do so, they should create a networking strategy that does not rely on just a single networking approach. By offering a mix of options from 1:1 conversations, small group conversation with either a specific topic given or not, to small team projects where delegates have to accomplish a challenge together, this gives delegates an option to find something where they are comfortable.

Multi-City Hybrid Event networking does not come without challenges. For example, not all participants will want to turn on their cameras. And while the tech team can work with speakers beforehand to ensure cameras and microphones are working properly, this option is not always possible for delegates. Also, having virtual and in-person delegates network with each other can be a challenge. Some people set up booths at the physical location where in-person attendees can meet virtual attendees, but report having found lower uptake.

But, perseverance can pay off. Technology is increasingly enabling good networking in the virtual world. In fact, some delegates may even prefer virtual networking when it is well-executed. Additionally, hybrid events give event planners the ability to build an online community, changing an event from a once-a-year event to an event that has multiple engagement points over time.

OTTAWA, CANADA

Tips and Tricks
For event organizers to create compelling online experiences include:

Smaller break-out sessions

Think of the size of your break-out sessions. Smaller break-out sessions can result in more meaningful conversations.

Hosts and Guests

Consider having a host for a break-out group to facilitate conversations. Some organizers even include live entertainers such as a magician or comedian to circulate through breakout sessions.
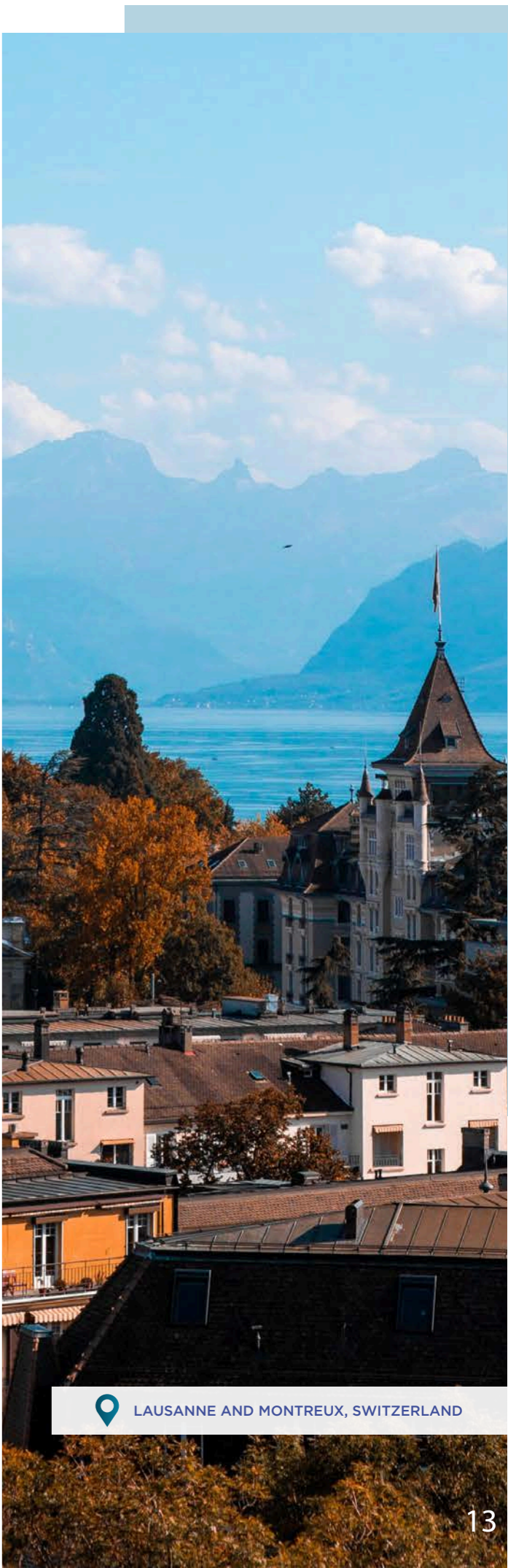
Themed activities

Including light hearted events such as games, icebreakers, and team activities in order to foster new connections and energize delegates. For example, some event organizers send out a package with supplies to all attendees and then have group activity sessions such as art classes, cocktail making lessons, cooking sessions, poetry writing jams, etc.

3 **Design an event that meets financial requirements.**

While the event vision should drive what is offered, event planners must also understand the financial implications of different options when designing an event.

Participants in the Co-Creation workshop highlighted the need to find new ways to do business. Additionally, online solutions are changing rapidly with new products and services being offered, making a full understanding of tools and costs is challenging. Also, costs, services, and standards vary by city. An event organizer in one city may not know what is available and what the prices are in another city located halfway across the globe.

Some common Multi-City Hybrid Event cost elements include:

Personnel to put the event together:

Event planners should be prepared for increased coordination and collaboration costs with an Multi-City Hybrid Event. The more complex the Multi-City Hybrid Event, the more time and effort is required to make it seamlessly work. Some event organizers find that a core centralized team that can hold the vision and coordinate plus local teams that are empowered to make locally relevant decisions works well.

LAUSANNE AND MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND

On-staff personnel during the event:

Event planners need to have staff at each location to ensure, for example, the set-up is correct, the speakers are chaperoned onto stage at the correct time, check-in goes smoothly, etc. Splitting staff across locations can be challenging. Additionally, virtual events also need staff to ensure speakers show up at the right place

Speaker and MCs/ hosts fees:

Ideally, each location (including virtual) will want to have its own host / MC. As there are different experiences, the host / MC can both facilitate the individual experience while providing the opportunities to weave together the separate locations

Location costs:

Location costs may increase or decrease depending on the size of the various venues required when event organizers shift to multiple locations. Additionally, different cities have different fee structures

Food and beverage costs:

Event organizers can choose to not provide food and beverage for remote delegates, thus reducing costs. Or they can choose to send food and beverages to the delegates' address to include them more in the event experience.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

IT fees:

Multi-City Hybrid Events require significantly more software and video costs. Some of the incremental fees are for:

Digital video fees:
Designing content themes and transitions, editing video content, pre-recording presentations, etc.

Broadcast fees:
Some event planners choose to have broadcast studios in each location while others choose to centralize this.

Collaboration software costs:
The online collaboration technologies space is fast-moving, making it challenging for event planners to fully understand what is possible in this realm. Event planners must decide between off-the-shelf solutions and custom build-outs. There are also open-source options available.

Technical support costs:
Presenters will need to be supported both before and during the event. In addition, virtual delegates often need support for IT-related problems during the event.

Production fees:
With multiple locations, event organizers need to coordinate with all local companies. As this requires in-depth expertise, many choose to go with a production company to manage this

CASE STUDY
Virtual Speaker Management

Intertask Conferences, a JPDL company, was tasked with organizing a 3.5 day 2000 delegate / 600+ speakers medical conference that shifted from in-person to virtual due to the pandemic. As such, they had to change the work that needed to be done to put on the conference. Some of the additional workstreams included:

There was a shift from recording the sessions (137), to recording individual session speakers (400). This delayed the recording schedule an additional 2.5 weeks.

Speakers may need more assistance in the virtual world. Intertask increased the speaker management team to 5 managers and assigned each speaker one person to manage their specific sessions. This ensured that the speaker was dealing with the same person to coordinate all deliverables such as: photo, bio, contact and alternate contact information, permissions and waivers, registration, how and when to submit presentations and schedule times for rehearsals, recording and live day participation.

The producer of each session needs to have a full plan (e.g. a Show Flow Document) to be able to seamlessly edit multiple speakers together, who have recorded in multiple formats, producing a final recording that transitions seamlessly and logically.

A communications system/protocol for all stakeholders for the live days needs to be implemented. Stakeholders need to receive constant updates and be aware of issues and solutions in real time. Intertask created a network that had the project manager as the hub – with spokes going to the platform technical team, speaker green room (to communicate with the Speaker Management Team), the client's project team, and the senior client lead.

There is a perception that running an Multi-City Hybrid Event just increases the costs. Participants in the Co-Creation sessions raised these issues as well as some potential offsets: increased delegate and sponsorship revenue. For example, more delegates can attend a virtual event. And more delegates can potentially attend an event when held locally in their own city. This increased delegate attendance can lead to not only increased delegate revenue but also increased sponsorship revenue.

However, while costs can increase with a Multi-City Hybrid Event, Co-Creation workshop participants pointed out that not every event has to include every option - it is possible to offer a streamlined version. In fact, the choice of what to offer should be driven by what the event's mission is and what the delegates need, not just by a laundry list of what is possible.

Design Risks	Issues Identified in Co-Creation Workshop	Potential Solutions Identified in Co-Creation Workshop
Content & Sessions	Content created without distribution channel considerations.	Content either works for the delegate's location or alternative content options for different locations or a difference in price.
	Increased time required to produce a Multi-City Hybrid event.	Touch points to weave the multiple locations together.
	The challenge of making both hybrid and online attractive.	In-person experience justifies the travel.
	The need for new customers.	Event takes advantage of the multiple locations.
	Multiple time zones.	
Content & Sessions	Making networking work across locations or with virtual.	Create a networking strategy that does not rely on a single approach (e.g. 1:1, small groups, small team challenges, etc.).
		Ensure delegates cameras and microphones work beforehand
Financing	Making the business model financially viable.	Increased delegate and sponsorship revenue from:
	Perception that Multi-City Hybrid Event and hybrid just mean more costs.	Increasing the number of delegates who potentially could attend.
	Understanding costs in rapidly changing space.	Increasing the number of delegates who want to attend / will pay more to see globally curated content.
	Understanding costs in another city.	
	Expectations for a cheaper virtual price point.	Offering a streamlined hybrid option without all the bells and whistles.
		Data mining on attendance data leading to extended marketing opportunities

SUSTAINABILITY

Most definitions of sustainability involve creating a product or service that meets our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Some definitions also include a social equity and economic development component. Whatever definition chosen, participants of the Co-Creation workshops wanted to organize an event in a sustainable way. Not only is this the right thing to do for the planet, but sponsors and delegates are increasingly demanding it.

The participants of the Co-Creation workshops identified the following four pain points when thinking about Multi-City Hybrid Event sustainability:

WINNIPEG, CANADA

1
Sustainability can be hard to apply to the Multi-City Hybrid Event context.

Delivering any event is a balancing act with many trade-offs. In the Multi-City Hybrid Event context then, is it more important to focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through reducing travel or reducing plastic usage in the food and beverage services or inviting lower-income participants or leaving behind a CSR legacy after the event? Is bringing delegates together to talk about ways to improve society more important than eliminating the green-house gases created by such an event?

2
Getting an accurate picture of the carbon footprint of an event can be challenging.
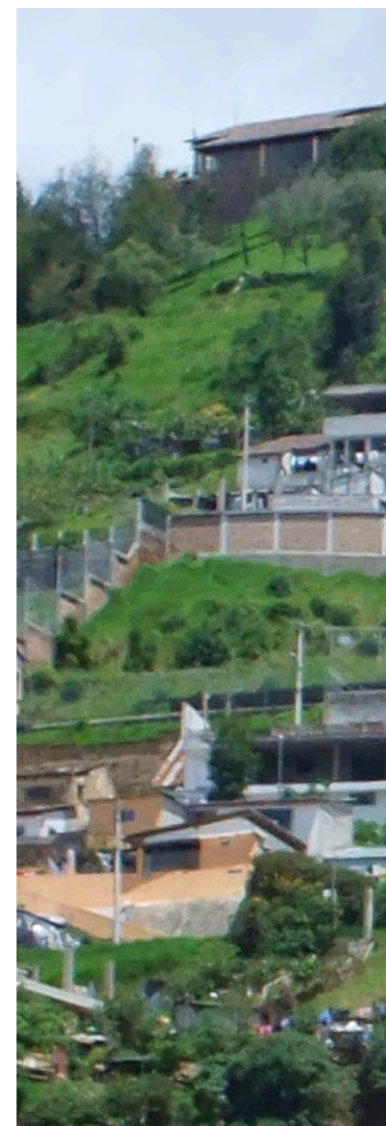
Virtual events can be more sustainable in terms of less travel but have a lot of "hidden energy costs" from e.g. streaming. For example, streaming one hour of a video requires 0.077 kW/hour. These costs are spread amongst viewing devices (72%), data transmission (23%), and data centres(5%).

3
Different locations have different levels and standards when it comes to sustainability.

It may be hard for an Multi-City Hybrid Event organizer to fully consider the sustainability impacts of having an event in two cities on two different continents.

QUITO, ECUADOR

4
Environmental standards are continuously evolving.

Multi-City Hybrid Event event organizers must continuously update their own sustainability practices in order to stay current.

The Alliance workshop participants came up with many creative ideas on how the Alliance could address these challenges. Some examples of ideas that were proposed in the Co-Creation sessions include:

1. Create a green policy for the event:

This can be the starting point for Multi-City Hybrid Event organizers. Similar to starting with a vision when creating the event, starting with a concrete set of principles for sustainability up front can help organizers and delegates make good choices as the event progresses.

2. Find sustainable suppliers for each location:

Event organizers, when evaluating suppliers, could investigate the sustainability profile of each vendor. In addition to how environmentally friendly the business is run, event organizers can consider choosing vendors that support local food sources, provide vegan / vegetarian meals, and minimize plastic through, for example, eco-cups and either faucets or office-sized water bottles.

3. Organize virtual exhibition halls:

Physical exhibition spaces can create significant environmental costs from booth materials and construction to lighting costs etc.

OTTAWA, CANADA

4. Engage delegates in sustainability:

Multi-City Hybrid Event organizers can create sustainability programs that engage the delegates. For example:

Delegates can be involved in CSR activities of the event. This can go from passive, where part of each delegate's fee goes to, for example, planting a tree or to some other green project, to more active to where some of the sessions are dedicated to sustainable issues or delegates engage in CSR as a part of the event.

Event organizers can make bicycles available for delegates if there are multiple locations within one city.

Discounts can be offered to delegates who choose eco-friendly transportation such as trains or buses.

Event organizers can reduce or eliminate give-away bags. Many times, the contents of these bags are not wanted / needed by participants and just end up in the garbage.
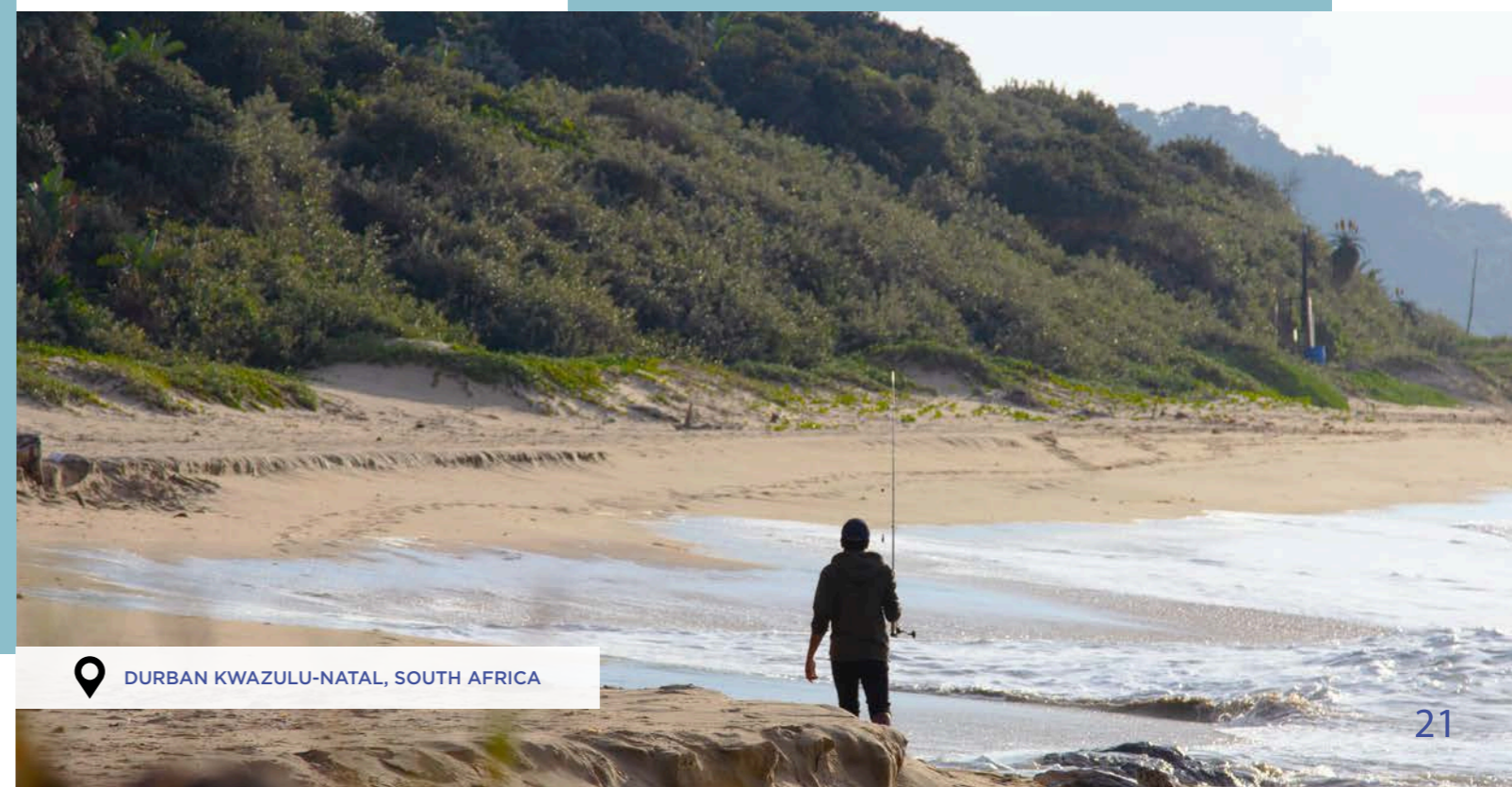
5. Minimize printed materials:

In today's modern world, a digital program should be able to be accessed by every delegate.

6. Make the eco-footprint visible to delegates:

When delegates have the choice between various options, including the environmental cost for each option can let the delegate make a more informed decision.

7. Consider more event hubs:

Multi-City Hybrid Event organizers can do a cost-benefit analysis when deciding on the number of hubs. More physical locations can translate into lower travel costs, but will increase other energy costs such as lighting and HVAC.

DURBAN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

There is a lot of room for creativity when thinking about how to make an event more sustainable. The only hard and fast principle would be that this must be genuine. Modern consumers can sense when something is "greenwashing" and react quite negatively. More information on sustainability can also be found on the website of the Global Destination Sustainability Movement, a network of 50 destinations committed to making events and tourism in their cities more sustainable. (https://www.gds.earth)

Sustainability Considerations	Issues Identified in Co-Creation Workshop	Potential Solutions Identified in Co-Creation Workshop
Event	Sustainability can be hard to apply.	Create a green policy for the event.
		Organize virtual exhibition halls.
	Environmental standards are continuously evolving.	Engage delegates in sustainability.
		Minimize printed materials. Make the eco-footprint visible to delegates.
Multi-city	Different locations have different standards.	Find sustainable suppliers for each location.
		Consider more event hubs.
Hybrid	Virtual events have hidden energy costs	

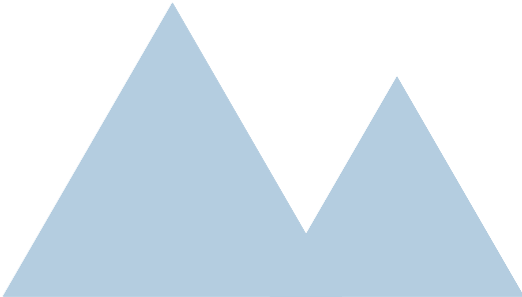# RISK

All large events have risks and, most likely, a risk mitigation plan. The risks associated with an in-person event can be different from an Multi-City Hybrid Event event. Additionally, timelines can vary as well. Multi-City Hybrid Event event organizers need to update their risk mitigation plan to reflect this new reality.

The participants at the Co-Creation workshops considered two main kinds of risks: technology and health & safety. Some examples of these risks in an Multi-City Hybrid Event in the post-lock-down era include:

- The network goes down either at a regional level or for a remote speaker or for some delegates.
- Speakers or delegates can not use event technology.
- Server or technical error results in presentations not being available.
- Delegate data gets hacked.
- Health rules regarding events change in some or all of the locations.
- Delegates get sick by attending the event

A Multi-City Hybrid Event Risk Mitigation Plan should anticipate a variety of likely scenarios and approved key messages. It should also include a critical path with realistic and achievable objectives and timelines. This will help both manage the expectations of all parties and outline the impacts if not met.

1. Technology

Moving from an in-person event to a Multi-City Hybrid Event not just increases the amount of technology risk, but it also changes the nature of the risks. Participants in the Co-Creation workshop identified two areas of technology risk: lack of skills and ensuring technical excellence.

Lack of skills:

As the world rapidly adjusted to a remote locked-down world, people and organizations needed to rapidly adopt new technologies to thrive. However, while these technologies have become available, not everyone knows how to use them. In the Multi-City Hybrid Event world, event organizers need to think about the technical skills of the event organizing team, the speakers, and the delegates.

Event organizers:

Unfortunately, with the rapid move to virtual, event organizers and their teams have not always had the time to develop the technical skills required to produce a hybrid or Multi-City Hybrid Event yet. Many people are feeling their way forward and trying new things for the first time. Additionally, with a rapidly changing environment and complex technical products, it can be hard to determine the best technology partner or solution. Industry associations offer training and education in order for people to upskill.

Delegates:

Delegates also come with all levels of technical skills and technical capabilities - some with advanced microphone and video capabilities and some calling in from a mobile phone in a not-so-quiet area and less than good connectivity. If delegates can not fully access the event platform, the quality or the content becomes irrelevant for those delegates.

Speakers:

Speakers who are experienced in a face-to-face setting don't necessarily migrate smoothly to presenting virtually/remotely. A great in-person speaker may come off as flat or not be able to connect with participants during an on-line session. Additionally, technical issues cannot be resolved as quickly as during in-person events because they may not be caused by the platform: they may be the speaker's Internet, computer or log-in issues. And finally, speakers need to be aware that timelines are different in a virtual environment. For example, last minute changes to the presentation cannot be loaded by the tech at the back of the room and be ready to present in ten minutes.

Ensuring Technical Excellence:

Having an event fail due to technical difficulties is a highly visible and potentially expensive risk. Stories abound of technical failures wrecking havoc at an event. Some examples include:

High level speakers agreeing to give a virtual interview only for their network to go down just as the interview begins.

A speaker who is ready for the next segment in front of an audience in the hundreds has his computer crash, requiring several painful minutes to be filled while his computer reboots.

A workshop that was structured around using an online facilitation tool has that tool crash just as the workshop starts.

Event planners need to have back-up solutions in place in case of the above or myriad of other technical failures that can happen.

Additionally, event planners need to align on technical delivery across multiple destinations so that all locations have the same look and feel as well as the same quality. This not only helps on branding, but ensures the same level of quality for all delegates.

And finally, event organizers need to protect delegate data. Having a great event where all the delegates go home happy only to later find that their registration and event data has been compromised will lead a bad taste in the delegate's mouth.

FUKUOKA, JAPAN

CASE STUDY

The World Press Freedom Conference (www.wpfc2020.com) was held on December 9th and 10th, 2020 in The Hague, Netherlands. This annual conference normally draws around 2000 people, but in 2020, they went virtual and had 7000 attendees from 133 countries. The team decided to produce every session as a real professional TV show. This required creating five studios (four in the location and a fifth mobile studio outside) and a staff of 200-300 people and multiple companies from audio-visual to camera to cybersecurity companies coming together to make this happen. Creating, producing, and delivering an online event of this caliber requires a very different skill set than for an offline event. Thus, the team worked with professionals from the television industry who understood this space - from how to keep audiences engaged virtually to how to ensure that the technology is running seamlessly to how to protect the data to how to manage the technology risks.

Delivering this type of conference required a lot more time, work, and cost. While food and beverage costs were less as attendees were virtual, the AV and technology costs were much higher. Additionally, the physical costs stayed the same as the team needed not just the main stage to broadcast, but all the convention center rooms for e.g. editorial spaces, backoffice, or staff catering.

More information on this conference can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpW3uTiby-hc&t=2s

Technology Considerations	Issues Identified in Co-Creation Workshop	Potential Solutions Identified in Co-Creation Workshop
Lack of Skills	**Event Organizers:** Need to upskill. Hard to determine the best technology partner or solution.	**Event Organizers:** Full-time technology employee.
	Speakers: Need virtual presentation skills. Technical issues may be the speaker's Internet, computer or log-in issues. Timelines and presentation skills are different in a virtual environment.	**Speakers:** Increase the number of staff to work with speakers to ensure that sessions run smoothly. Consider outsourcing to ensure adequate staffing
	Delegates: All levels of technical literacy.	**Delegates:** An event sponsored short pre-session or video training on the technology. Complimentary tech-checks.
Ensuring Technical Excellence	A visible event failure due to technical difficulties. Aligning on technical delivery across multiple destinations so that all locations have the same look and feel as well as the same quality. Protecting delegate data.	Event organizers' technical set-up can plan for the possibility of technical failure at various points. A hybrid event studio and broadcasting studio. Securing data to the highest standards. Share data policy with delegates.

2. Health and Safety

As the world opens up from COVID-19 lockdowns, there are incremental health and safety risks that event planners must consider. Co-creation workshop participants identified the following health and safety issues:

Event Closure Risk:

The risk that an in-person event or location gets cancelled due to the pandemic. With ever-changing pandemic conditions, this is an ongoing concern. Current estimates have that some parts of the globe may not reach full vaccination coverage until 2023. In the meantime, there is always the risk of variants developing and other set-backs.

Event Planning:

Event planners need to understand the health and safety requirements of each physical location, which can vary by country and over time. In addition, the Co-Creation Workshop participants were rather cognizant that COVID-19 was not likely to be the last global health threat. Event organizers need to be able to plan for the next global health crisis and know how to prepare for it.

Delegate and Staff Safety:

Event organizers need to ensure that both staff and delegates can safely travel to the event. If a country blocks international travellers from certain countries, this could impact some delegates ability to attend an event.

Additionally, once delegates and staff are at the event, event planners want to ensure that they can remain safe during the event. This includes thinking about the safety of each event location, protocols for delegates and staff while at the event (such as social distancing, masks, hand sanitizers, cleaning, food and beverage and more), and the food and beverage service.

Health and Safety Considerations	Issues Identified in Co-Creation Workshop	Potential Solutions Identified in Co-Creation Workshop
Event Closure Risk	An in-person event or location can get cancelled due to the pandemic.	Contract negotiation to reduce cancellation costs due to changes in a country's rules regarding meetings for each location.
Planning	Health and safety requirements vary by country and over time. What is the next global health crisis and how to prepare for it?	A small centralized team working with local empowered teams at each hub who can ensure that local health requirements are fully met. Clearly define health protection guidelines up front, before the event starts. "Sub-hubs" to keep the number of participants in one location lo...
Delegate and Staff Safety	Delegates must be able to safely travel to the event. Delegates must be able to remain safe during the event.	**Location** Locations with advance... rification systems. Locations with outdoo... networking or sessions... Have plenty of steriliz... event. **Protocols** Build delegate awaren... and safety issues and p... soon as they register. Send delegates a he... before the event starts. Provide COVID tests... mandatory Masks on during the ev... Temperature screening... Digitally distribute info... the amount of paper... touched. Provide a special lany... who want to emphasize... **Food and Beverage:** Choose options which i...

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

The Events Industry Council has developed risk evaluation tools, delegate protocols, stakeholder communications, and resource glossary to help address the health and safety risks. More information can be found on their website at:

https://eventscouncil.org/Industry-Insights/Industry-Resources

HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE UNFOLDED

There are still many unknowns in how to make a Multi-City Hybrid Event work. This White Paper is the start of a conversation. It highlights areas that the Alliance is considering as far as its next steps.

The Alliance is searching for best practices every day and is conversing with different parties to gather knowledge of the opportunities that this space unfolds.

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

OTTAWA, CANADA

THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS

Solution Benefit

The Hybrid City Alliance has been developed with the client in the spotlight. It offers one point of contact to all the association and corporate clients interested in organizing a hybrid (multi-city) event or simply receiving information about the possibilities.

Hybrid City Alliance is an alliance of convention bureaus representing cities with excellent infrastructure for hybrid events. Hybrid City Alliance and its local convention Bureaus' members, consisting of AV professionals, Congress organizers, venues, etc., can advise you on the best solution for your event.

An additional benefit is that you will be working with convention bureaus, which can put you in contact with relevant stakeholders where possible in any of the Hybrid City Alliance destinations and support you with the event legacy.

Have you also been asking yourself questions like:

Are you thinking about organizing a hybrid event and not sure where to start?

Do you need assistance with planning a hybrid or a multi-hub hybrid event?

What format of hybrid events are there, and which one is for me?

Can I organize a hybrid event with a limited budget?

How to choose destinations for the hubs?

How to involve the cities?

Are you looking for professionals around the world that could host your hybrid multi-city event?

If yes, then get in touch with The Alliance.

www.hybridcityalliance.org

GENEVA
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE
CO-FOUNDER

THE HAGUE
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE
CO-FOUNDER

OTTAWA
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE
CO-FOUNDER

PRAGUE
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE
CO-FOUNDER

ANTWERP
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

LAUSANNE MONTREUX
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

SEOUL
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

SYDNEY
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

FUKUOKA
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

ZÜRICH
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

CANNES
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

WINNIPEG
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

EDMONTON
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

DURBAN KWAZULU-NATAL
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

QUITO
HYBRID CITY ALLIANCE

www.hybridcityalliance.org