

Planning a Conference Centre

All over the world new Conference Centres are being planned and built which, it is now generally accepted, require the consultation with Professional Congress Organisers (PCOs) at the planning stage to avoid many of the design problems that have arisen in the past.

IAPCO represents over 100 leading PCOs based in over 30 countries and working in all major conference cities and countries throughout the world. As such, IAPCO is in the unique position of being able to compile the criteria which the end user seeks to find in a national or international conference centre.

Whilst every venue is designed with a certain market in mind, there are some basic requirements which can be usefully applied to all centres. For the purposes of this document, IAPCO has only considered the facilities, space and equipment which are to be made available on a rental basis either directly from the venue or from reliable suppliers as some equipment need not always be permanently installed. The administrative office requirements for the day-to-day running of the centre would also need to be incorporated and the needs of other end-users considered.

This guide (a) describes spaces needed for an international Congress and their relative size; (b) identifies key design criteria for meeting venues; (c) provides their owners and operators with suggestions for the management of the different elements of them.

Each design element is preceded by a brief commentary, explaining the relevance and importance of that element to the meeting professional. The key design issues and critical management decisions which have an effect on the utility of venues, and therefore their attractiveness to the client are highlighted.

The guide does not set out to be an exhaustive architectural specification. It does not deal with a range of engineering, architectural and construction issues. Its concern is with the function of the venue and its various elements. For that reason it does not refer to design or construction standards per se, assuming that designers will design to appropriate Codes and Standards.

Best Practice design criteria are introduced with the word 'Provide' and Key Management Decisions with the word 'Consider'. The Guide is not, however, intended to be prescriptive – rather it provides a menu from which operators and owners may choose to brief their designers, depending on the size and sophistication of the facilities they wish to develop, and the type and size of meetings they are interested in attracting.

The flow of the guide reflects the pattern followed in the use of a meeting venue by a meeting professional – external access flows to internal transport, to delivery and storage, to the availability of essential services, and so on.

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OVERVIEW AND DEFINITIONS

Each element of the guide is intended to stand alone. This leads to some repetition – meeting organizers will find the heart felt cry for cherry pickers and plenty of trolleys familiar, whilst others will find the duplication repetitive. The authors had the option of referring to each essential of desirable element only once and cross referencing it, but believe that it may be easier for users of the guide to find a comprehensive statement of what is required set out in each element.

The guide is primarily intended for operators and owners of new venues, but will provide a useful checklist for owners and operators of existing venues to benchmark and measure the suitability of their facilities for different types of meetings, and of the requirements of meeting professionals for different types of meetings.

The meeting professionals the authors had in mind cover a wide spectrum of people and callings, all of whom work in different types of venues to deliver related services:

- Meeting Organisers (professional organisers or those employed directly by an organisation staging a meeting)
- Venue operators
- Production houses providing theming, staging and events
- Equipment suppliers supplying audio visual equipment and/or services, staging, lighting and so on
- Transport and tour operators
- Entertainers
- Caterers
- and of course the end client, the meeting attendee.

Standard nomenclature has been used throughout the guide:

- 'Venue' has been used as a generic descriptor for the wide range of conference and convention centres, hotels and motels, training and conference centres, halls and other spaces within which meetings are held;
- 'Meeting' has been used to capture the panoply of conferences, exhibitions, sales and management meetings, events, training programmes and educational activities which involve groups meeting together;
- 'Attendee' has been used throughout to describe the delegates, participants, exhibitors or members of the public without whose presence the meeting would not have been organised;
- 'PCO' has been used to refer to Professional Congress Organiser;
- 'Client' has been used as a generic descriptor of the person or organization with whom the venue operator has primary contact, whether a professional meeting organizer, corporate or associate meeting planner, exhibition organizer or member of the public organising a meeting.
- 'Build-up' and 'Breakdown' have been used to refer to the movement into and out of venues of materials and equipment, particularly related to audio visual and production needs.

CAPACITIES

Minimum capacity requirements are detailed below for a Convention Centre accommodating 3500 delegates.

The capacities for the convention can be reduced proportionally as the number of delegates decreases, however, this is not necessarily the case with the exhibition. While delegate numbers may be lower, exhibitors may consider that the quality of the delegates is such that they require the same amount of exhibition space as they would for a larger attendance.

Auditorium	3500 seats
Main Halls	Single level, flat floor space which can be divided (at the very minimum) into 4 areas. One area of 1000 theatre style and 3 areas of 400 theatre style.
Breakout Rooms	10 rooms of varying sizes (maximum of 400 theatre style and a minimum of 150 theatre style).
Exhibition/Poster Displays	10000sqm (gross), 5000sqm (net usable exhibition space). All in a column-free space on one level.
Other spaces	Flexible spaces for offices, ad hoc meetings, secretariat, speaker preparation, etc.
Foyers	Wide foyers (rather than long ones) so that they can be used, not just for traffic flow, but also for registration, internet area, poster displays and stand-up catering. When there are multiple hirers using the venue, foyer areas need to be designated for each hirer.

ELEMENT A1	ACCESS – EXTERNAL
<p>COMMENTARY: Access broadly breaks down into three categories: Individuals arriving by car or public transport People arriving in groups by coach Trucks and service vehicles</p> <p>The most important elements are ease of access and facility of entry for all categories and for all aspects of access: external, internal, delivery, storage and parking.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easily identifiable entrance and exit, and clear external signage, which may need to be illuminated. 2. Sufficient unloading/loading space to accommodate multiple events. 3. Level ground floor with loading docks of sufficient size for all services including client vehicles. 4. Large coach drop off and collection points adjacent to main entrance, with sufficient turning space and height, accessible under cover. 5. Doors of sufficient width and height or demountable/retractable walls to permit truck access (trucks delivering exhibit and staging equipment pose particular problems). 6. Floor loadings to permit truck access. 7. Easily identifiable and weather protected entrance and reception area for attendees. 8. Clearly identified disabled access. 9. In larger venues, security systems and monitoring at loading docks. 10. Separate entry for venue staff. 11. Storage space (for several days) for pre-congress consignments including exhibitors' displays materials.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manager/security guard contactable direct by phone. 2. Recording and coding of all deliveries. 3. In larger venues, loading dock staffed at nominated times, and a security management and monitoring system in place. 4. Area to be clean, well lit and secure with plenty of trolleys for client use. 5. Provision of Concierge and portage services, which include provision for receipt of urgent courier deliveries to front of house rather than loading docks. 6. Security arrangements for VIPs. 7. Signage for dedicated service access routes. 8. Ready access for the PCO to storage areas.

ELEMENT A2	ACCESS – INTERNAL
<p>COMMENTARY: Clear separation of front of house from back of house functions should be reflected in differing access routes to different parts of venues by the public and venue staff, and separation of noise and smells from areas used by attendees. Access between spaces within the convention centre should be easy and well-signposted.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear signposting throughout venue. 2. Disabled access to all areas (including easy access on to stages for disabled speakers). 3. Close proximity for attendees to car parks and undercover access from car parks and/or accommodation. 4. Service corridors for goods and services from loading dock to function areas. 5. Function areas identifiable from service corridors. 6. Service lifts with wide, tall doors capable of carrying large equipment and heavy loads. 7. Goods lifts from loading dock to all public areas large enough to accommodate goods to be exhibited, e.g. display equipment, vehicles. 8. Separate kitchen lift service for food and beverage. 9. Function rooms lockable by client as well as house security. 10. Access for vehicles to function areas to unload and load, with appropriate floor load bearing capacity.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 24-hour access for all organisers, either through security or card-key, or otherwise by prior arrangement. 2. Access to facilitate smooth 'build-up' and 'breakdown' of staging and audio visual equipment outside normal business hours. 3. Plenty of trolleys for movement of meeting materials and equipment. 4. Cherry picker and forklift.

ELEMENT A3	ACCESS – PARKING
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plenty of space for parking while unloading/loading goods and equipment with a dedicated car park for vehicles delivering goods or equipment. 2. Parking for trucks with sufficient height and turning space where staging, audio visual or other equipment needs to be packed in or out within a short time period. 3. Long-term parking for trucks used for transporting production equipment and exhibitors' displays. 4. Coach parking bays off street. 5. Sufficient undercover parking for attendees. 6. All parking, including venue staff parking, should be secure. 7. Disabled spaces. 8. Direct access to venue lobby. 9. Clear directions for exiting car park. 10. Sufficient cashier stations (everyone likely to leave at once). 11. Sufficient exits to street, with adequate queuing lanes.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A percentage of parking dedicated to meeting attendees, provided free or at preferential rates. 2. Designated reserved space for organisers' access, provided free or at preferential rates. 3. Clearly displayed height dimensions and hours of operation in parking facilities.

ELEMENT A4	ACCESS – DELIVERY AND STORAGE
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colour coded storage bays set aside for specific meetings. 2. Facilities to store up to one week prior to and two days after a meeting. 3. Storage available for meeting organisers, exhibitors' packaging materials and production equipment cases or offsite storage provided by a company with a delivery service to the convention centre on the setup day.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colour coded pre-addressed labels to differentiate meetings, matching colour coded bays for different meetings. 2. Plenty of trolleys (and forklifts in larger venues) and staff to assist build-up of meeting and exhibition material. 3. Management guidelines for incoming and outgoing goods.

ELEMENT B1	TRANSPORT – EXTERNAL
<p>COMMENTARY: Transport incorporates several elements:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The movement of goods into and out of the venue The movement of goods from one area to another The movement of attendees around the centre</p> <p>Free flow and lack of potentially congested areas is vital to the smooth and efficient operation of a meeting venue.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive-up, drive-in access (refer to Element A1). 2. Truck to trolley at loading docks or unload by hoist. 3. Space for queuing buses. 4. Turning area for delivery trucks. 5. Feature lifts in larger multi-level venues. 6. Covered walkways connecting various areas within and without the venue and weather protection to transport pick up and drop off points. 7. Easy access to public transport. 8. Easily identifiable taxi waiting bays and call buttons.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address for delivery dock clearly shown on brochures or letters to organisers (refer to Element A4). 2. 'People movers' operating around site. 3. Shuttles from nearby hotels. 4. Schedule unloading pre-convention and packing out post-convention.

ELEMENT B2	TRANSPORT – INTERNAL
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Back of house well signed to facilitate transfer of goods from loading docks. 2. Passageways of sufficient width for trolleys. 3. Big goods lifts in larger venues. 4. Direct lift or hoist from loading dock to upper levels. 5. Moving footway facilities to enhance efficient movement of people in venues where long distances are involved. 6. Walkways for people to walk freely, avoiding intersections where groups of people have to cross. 7. Non slip easily maintained floors. 8. Stairs, lifts and high-speed escalators to facilitate the movement of people in multi level venues in a short period of time.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sufficient trolleys, forklifts and pallet jacks for build-up and breakdown of meeting and exhibition materials and equipment. 2. Cherry pickers for use in function rooms. 3. In large exhibition areas (say 10,000 sq. metres) a self drive golf cart can be useful. 4. Management programming a delivery goods timetable and coordinating it with meeting organisers. 5. Discouraging exhibition stands and catering in walkways, in favour of dedicated pre and post function areas.

ELEMENT C1	SERVICES – PLUMBING
<p>COMMENTARY: Meeting groups usually break en masse so plumbing and bathroom location and capacity are important.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sufficient toilets (including disabled) in several locations, all fitted with airlocks. 2. Minimum dimensions per cubicle 1.5m by .85m, with doors to swing in. 3. Cubicle partitions minimum 2100 mm high. 4. One unisex shower for use by convention VIPs and organisers. 5. Two continuous toilet roll dispensers per cubicle. 6. Paper towels and dryers (not just one or the other). 7. Adequate soap dispensers. 8. Hot water available in washbasins in toilet facilities. 9. Full length mirrors available in all toilets. 10. Plumbing available in one breakout room for wet workshops. 11. Drinking water fountains. 12. Water and waste disposal at exhibition area for exhibitors with wet displays and catering.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinating different meetings schedules to avoid queues. 2. Regularly replenishing tissues. 3. Regular cleaning and restocking. 4. Regular servicing of dryers and towels.

ELEMENT C2	SERVICES – HEATING, VENTILATION & AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS
<p>COMMENTARY: Unlike an office where activity is constant throughout the day, meeting spaces peak and trough with sudden surges of people moving from area to area. Air distribution should provide even, draught free air movement and be readily able to be adjusted. Comfort conditions should consider Fanger’s PPD/PMV equations including the effect on mean radiant temperature of external glazing.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual air-conditioning in all meeting rooms. 2. Windows that open, where possible, in smaller meeting rooms or public areas. 3. Air conditioning which: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. is quiet; ii. is effective; iii. is quickly adjustable; iv. is controllable in each room; and v. provides uniform comfort conditions throughout each room. 4. Ceiling fan where air conditioning is unavailable. 5. Separate ventilation system in areas where smoking is permitted. 6. Keypad in each area which allows for adjustments to be readily made.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turning off air conditioning when individual spaces are not in use. 2. Regular inspection, cleaning and testing of air conditioning system.

ELEMENT C3	SERVICES – POWER
<p>COMMENTARY: Almost all facilities within venues rely on the availability of sufficient power widely distributed throughout the venue. Access to a sufficient number of power outlets in convenient locations is a substantial point of difference between venues.</p> <p>The use of solar or other environmentally responsible power sources and techniques to moderate fossil fuel consumption will increasingly be an issue for meeting organisers, and for venues.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple power points, easily accessible, built into floors, walls and ceilings in all areas likely to require it (both meeting rooms and open spaces). 2. Sufficient power including 15 amp GPOs and at least 300 amps per phase for concerts in larger venues. 3. Floor well access for power in meeting and exhibition areas. 4. Access to 3-phase including 5 pin GPOs or other power types for high demand, front and back of venue, and centre side walls in dividable rooms. 5. Complete back up system for emergencies to maintain all services (standby generator with uninterruptable power supply, gas back up or similar). 6. Power points clearly labeled with circuit breaker number and phase around all meeting rooms on multiple circuits to spread loads. 7. Surge protectors for computers as well as for whole building. 8. Earth leakage detector and cut out, particularly in kitchen and client nerve centre areas. 9. Power circuits for plant and equipment, e.g. ice making machinery, separate circuits for client use (particularly computers). 10. Back up power system, e.g. generator.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing extension leads and power boards, clearly marked and easily identifiable. 2. Providing qualified electrician on-site in larger venues, and access to one in other venues. 3. Plan clearly showing number of GPOs per circuit. 4. Location plan for light and power points and sound controls accessible to organisers and technicians. 5. Clearly advertise any power charges in the initial proposal. Detail these costs in the venue contract.

ELEMENT C4	SERVICES – LIGHT
<p>COMMENTARY: Flexible well directed lighting allows the audience in meeting spaces to see the speaker clearly, to see each other, take notes, see the screen and see entertainment. Lighting levels need to be easily adjustable and areas readily isolated.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible fully controllable lighting to all meeting room areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. track lighting in smaller rooms; ii. spots and special lighting on tracks in main auditorium; iii. speakers always visible even when the lights are dimmed; iv. room lighting adjustable from the lectern; v. wall washes for displays and down lighting to the areas where the audience sits; vi. able to be easily adjusted by the meeting organiser. 2. Dedicated and flexible lighting systems in presentation areas to cope with straight oral and highly produced live action sequences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. all lights capable of tight focus to prevent spill onto projection screens; ii. portable and wireless control systems to allow operation anywhere in the room. 3. No fixed protruding light fittings in meeting rooms, especially chandeliers in multi-purpose rooms unless they are full retractable. 4. Exhibition areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. circuits to assist display lighting; ii. well distributed system to reach all parts of the area when displays are in position; iii. ceiling grid fixing points to mount additional lights. 5. Lighting to stair treads in tiered auditorium. 6. Emergency and Exit lighting complying with the country's building code. 7. Extra lights for riggers working in roof trusses. 8. Dimmable quartz halogen lamps throughout.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cherry pickers, scissor lift or boom lift in larger venues to access ceiling lights and power grid.

ELEMENT C5	SERVICES – COMMUNICATIONS
<p>COMMENTARY: As business and the community in general accepts modern communications technology, so must the meeting venue. Outsiders (speakers, callers) need to reach in, attendees need to reach each other and to reach out. Provision of facilities for the disabled needs consideration.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High speed wireless and wired broadband facilities in meeting and exhibition space. As a guideline one wired broadband line per 50 people. 2. Announcement and electronic message monitors in public areas. 3. Public address system and “call to attendees” bell or other. 4. ‘Meeting in Progress’ lights outside front and back of house entry to meeting rooms. 5. Multiple phone/fax outlets for registration and business areas, and outlets for computer modems. 6. Mobile communication systems for clients, show producers and crews. 7. Loop for hearing impaired. 8. Built-in interpretation facilities.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employees dedicated to communications in larger venues. 2. Direct and immediate access to floor manager during events. 3. Walkie talkies available if required. 4. Dedicated telephone and fax numbers available at time of booking for publication by clients. 5. Clearly advertise any communications charges in the initial proposal. Detail these costs in the venue contract.

ELEMENT C6	SERVICES – AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT
<p>COMMENTARY: Speakers, audiences and organisers have seen the improved communication which is possible when there is flexibility in the shape and layout of rooms, when lighting can be controlled freely, and when speakers use a variety of media (video, computer, response systems, stage effects, live action, etc.). All this creates the need for venue management to decide what to provide and on what basis. Built in equipment should be limited to auditoria. All other spaces should be able to be equipped as required.</p> <p>This Element should be considered in conjunction with Elements dealing with Communications, Power, Light, Production and Meeting Room Services.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible, comprehensive and adjustable provision for audio visual equipment rather than fixed. 2. Movable panels and storage which can easily be erected to neatly enclose audio visual operator and equipment at the back of meeting rooms. 3. Ceiling grids (concealed preferably) to fly video/data projectors, lights and other equipment. 4. In-house music able to be easily adjusted by meeting organisers. 5. Cable traps under the entrance doors to each room.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible approach to provision of equipment and services with the ability to have either in-house or external operators and equipment providers. 2. Providing equipment at no extra charge, including stage risers, a lectern, at least one microphone and a sound system adequate for the spoken word, some basic focusable lighting, screens for front and rear projection in various sizes and an electronic whiteboard. 3. Media splitter box in main meeting room. 4. Providing experienced in-house technical people to set up, operate and pull down equipment if it is supplied by the venue. 5. Providing a prospectus of available equipment in plain English. 6. Maintaining and replacing equipment on a regular basis. 7. Equipping staff with technical and interpersonal skills to deal with clients, or developing a commercial relationship with an audio visual supplier which provides all services on a preferred supplier basis. 8. Distinctive identification e.g. clothing or badges, for venue audio visual services staff. 9. Information indicating safe load capacity (weight) for ceiling grids for suspension of equipment. 10. Swipe card registration and voting systems. 11. Set up flexibility permitting a screen to be mounted in the centre of the stage area, and lecterns to either side.

ELEMENT D	PRODUCTION
<p>COMMENTARY: Venues must be able to offer facilities that are as flexible as possible for productions. Different stage and seating configurations and rigging points must be available.</p> <p>This Element should be considered in conjunction with Elements dealing with Communications, Power, Light, Audio Visual Services and Meeting Room Services.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stage sections/pieces rather than fixed stages. 2. Perimeter grid around walls with frequent hanging/lighting points. 3. Drapes made for correct floor to ceiling height and a tab track around the walls from which the drapes hang. 4. Dance floor pieces available. 5. High ceilings without fixed protruding light fittings. 6. Flexible uniform ceiling grid system (with rated points of at least 2 tonnes in a main conference hall) to suspend trusses, motors, lighting or other fixtures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. regardless of room layout; ii. adjustable height an advantage. 7. No chandeliers.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible with build-up/out. 2. Staff with good knowledge of all fixtures and fittings. 3. Cherry-pickers, scissor lift, boom lift or similar and ladders available on site. 4. Technicians on site. 5. Photographs and drawings of previous themed events, to demonstrate how the venue can be used. 6. Floor plans with accurate dimensions which include exits and any areas which cannot be covered, e.g. kitchen entry, fire hydrants.

ELEMENT E	CATERING
<p>COMMENTARY: The ideal venue will cater to both the attendees en masse and to the public through a wide variety of food and beverage outlets.</p> <p>Pricing policies have long been a problem with clients showing a resistance to significant payment for food and beverage before it is consumed.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kitchen or food preparation access close to all meeting, pre function and foyer areas, or hot box system in lieu. 2. Extractor fans to all food areas. 3. Food outlets in public areas e.g. coffee shop for attendees doing business in meeting time. 4. Meeting rooms insulated from sounds and smells of food preparation and dining areas. 5. Food preparation and dining area set up sounds insulated from meeting rooms. 6. Gas fitments in kitchen or food preparation areas. 7. Staff canteen and catering area for contractors.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible arrangements suiting the client, not the caterer: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. a broad range of food styles and prices, with good range of wines; ii. ability to pay deposits first and balance after the event; iii. ability to specify menus rather than force clients to choose from standard menus; iv. ability to provide for special dietary needs; v. attention paid to imaginative food presentation; vi. all dishes on buffets to be labeled for international congresses. 2. Mobile fast food and beverage outlets. 3. Coffee facility open early in the morning. 4. Staff available when sessions delayed or have early or late start or finish. 5. Staff with adequate training to understand and meet different attendees' needs.

ELEMENT F1	FACILITIES – SIGNAGE
<p>COMMENTARY: Both designers and managers have an immediate opportunity to place the visitor in a comfort zone through clear and concise internal signage (both printed and electronic), and to 'brand' the venue with external signage.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<p>EXTERNAL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear signage on main access routes starting as far away from the venue as possible. 2. External signage to roof level sufficient for identification of venue. 3. External signage at ground level sufficient for direction of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. 4. Temporary customising e.g. with electronic display to enable specific events to be announced. 5. Flagpoles for clients' flags or banners. 6. External and flood lighting consistent with the image of the venue. 7. All external signs using universal/international symbols. <p>INTERNAL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All meeting rooms, public spaces and other facilities well signposted, and clearly labeled, in words and internationally recognised symbols including tactile signage for the visually impaired. 2. Visible directory board in foyer updated regularly and location plans throughout. 3. Colour coding of facilities and different levels or sectors. 4. Temporary sign holders compatible with décor. Wall mounted and free standing available. 5. Well located, accessible hanging points or locations in meeting and public spaces. 6. Clocks in foyers and public spaces.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information desk in prominent position. 2. Providing accurate dimensions for flagpoles. 3. Organisers prefer, where possible, to supplement existing signage rather than replace it. Existing signs should allow space for additional information to be included.

ELEMENT F2	FACILITIES – FLOOR FINISHES
<p>COMMENTARY: Floor finishes are almost always selected for reasons of economy or aesthetics rather than for the comfort of the client or user. A better balance is needed between economy and comfort on the one hand, and between the competing demands of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the other.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Floor finishes which are hard wearing, in neutral colours, and comfortable underfoot over extended periods; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. carpet in all meeting rooms and public space; ii. carpet tiles with underlay in high pedestrian traffic areas; iii. portable ergonomic matting behind registration and information counters. 2. Non skid, non articulated surface in vehicular traffic areas, to maximise safety and minimise noise. 3. Portable dance floors in 1 sqm sections. 4. Central vacuum system.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cleaning venue to suit meeting organisers' schedule.

ELEMENT F3	FACILITIES – WALL FINISHES
<p>COMMENTARY: Aesthetics are important. We all enjoy beautiful things, but 'creative' wall finishes should be limited to public areas to allow the meeting organiser to be creative inside the meeting room.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low maintenance and durable finishes. 2. Plain non reflective surfaces and neutral colours least likely to clash with temporary installations. 3. Hanging points for drapes or displays. 4. No mirror surfaces in meeting spaces. 5. Acoustically designed, flat, no intrusions, no protruding wall sconces. 6. Retractable soundproofed walls, lockable for rigidity and unobtrusive when retracted.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular cleaning of all surfaces, particularly glass and metal.

ELEMENT F4	FACILITIES – VIP / DRESSING / REHEARSAL ROOMS
<p>COMMENTARY: A performance will always run more smoothly if entertainers have good facilities. Meeting venues that are not purpose built should endeavour to supply the additional fixtures which can equip a 'dressing room' at short notice. Larger venues will require them to be permanently in place.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<p>VIP ROOMS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rooms should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. have discrete access; iii. be comfortably furnished (both lounge seating and work table); iv. have mirrors with good lighting over vanity tables; v. have a separate toilet and shower; vi. have audio and video feed from auditoria; vii. be equipped with phones; viii. have multiple power outlets. <p>DRESSING ROOMS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. One dedicated dressing room in venues not primarily geared to entertainment, easily divided into male/female when necessary, keeping access to toilets in mind. 3. Rooms should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. be close to the main meeting room; ii. have discrete access; iii. be equipped with secure hanging space; iv. have mirrors with good lighting over vanity tables; v. have separate toilets and showers; vi. have audio and video feed from all performance areas; vii. be equipped with phones; viii. have multiple power outlets. 4. A 'green room' in venues large enough to have several entertainers during a single performance in which food and beverage can be provided. <p>REHEARSAL ROOM</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enclosed space without natural light close to the dressing room. 2. Sound system, lighting.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food and beverage supplied conveniently to these areas. 2. Regular servicing of bathrooms and supply of towels. 3. Iron and ironing board in dressing rooms.

ELEMENT G1	NERVE CENTRE – REGISTRATION DESK
<p>COMMENTARY: The meeting organiser is attracted to venues which recognise and assist in overcoming the challenges involved in setting up a temporary headquarters or 'nerve centre' for each meeting. Venues which anticipate and respond to the challenges make a considerable contribution to the smooth running of meetings, and the minimisation of the pressure under which meeting organisers often work on site.</p> <p>Sensitive design and management of registration, secretariat and media facilities make a significant difference to the organiser and the success of the meeting.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate number of mobile and modular registration desks with fronts 1500mm high and work surface 1200 high behind, (including computer equipment access), and chairs of appropriate height to cater for multiple concurrent events. See also Element F2 – ergonomic matting. The desks should not be a built in feature. 2. Number of units to suit the number of attendees expected. 3. Facilities for storage of satchels and other materials and equipment. 4. Mobile screens available for screening or use as notice/message boards. 5. Lockup facility at desk for storage of computers and other equipment. 6. Power outlets well distributed to suit possible alternative locations. 7. Lighting levels appropriate to intensive administrative work. 8. Phone, fax and data outlets. 9. Private area to check cash, etc.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing space for satchel packing before registration. 2. Clearly advertise any registration facility charges in the initial proposal. Detail these costs in the venue contract.

ELEMENT G2	NERVE CENTRE – SECRETARIAT OFFICE
COMMENTARY: The secretariat office needs to be close to the registration area.	
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separate lockable secretariat office required for larger meetings of more than 2 days duration. Key provided to organisers. 2. Phones, fax and data lines. 3. Good light is essential. 4. Space for storage of material prior to the meeting. 5. Basic kitchen facilities adjacent for self-service drinks/snacks.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular rubbish removal. 2. Trestle tables for computers and records, and tables and chairs for staff to relax during breaks. 3. Computer, printers, modems and photocopiers available for hire by meeting organisers. 4. Meeting table and some basic stationery available. 5. Trolleys which can be used for storing satchels prior to event and easy transport to registration desk on the day. 6. Rubbish containers including recycling bins sufficient for large volumes of material. 7. Space to set up a business centre (equipment and furniture provided to meet the organiser's requirements).

ELEMENT G3	NERVE CENTRE – PCO OFFICE
COMMENTARY: The office is primarily a briefing room and a space for PCO staff breaks.	
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimum of 25sqm close to the Registration Desk. 2. Lockable. 3. Basic kitchen facilities adjacent for self-service drinks/snacks.

ELEMENT G4	NERVE CENTRE – MEDIA FACILITIES
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dedicated room for media representatives equipped with adequate power, phone, fax and modem facilities. 2. Separate room for interviews closely located to speakers' room, with good lighting, sound proof and no wall decoration. 3. Media room in larger venues needs full communications facilities and TV reception.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuous self serve catering. 2. Communications facilities, e.g. phone, fax, data.

ELEMENT G5	NERVE CENTRE – SPEAKERS' READY ROOM
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Space for multiple speakers to check their presentations and meet with others. 2. Ample power outlets for catering equipment and audio visual equipment. 3. Located within easy reach of the meeting rooms. 4. Facilities to enable audio-visual presentations to be transmitted seamlessly and speedily to all meeting spaces.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tea/coffee regularly replenished.

ELEMENT H1	MEETING ROOMS – FACILITIES
<p>COMMENTARY: The services, facilities and joinery made available from or included in meeting rooms need to be flexible and comprehensive, designed and maintained to provide optimum surroundings for attendees, ready access for attendees and ease of organisation for meeting organisers.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pillarless space. 2. Flexible layout with space able to be divided into various size meeting rooms. 3. Full access for disabled into and within meeting rooms (including access to stages). 4. Attendees' entry at the back of rooms. 5. Every seat must have a clear sightline to the platform and any audio-visual presentations. 6. A ceiling height of a minimum of 3.6m for a room for a maximum of 300 delegates. Ceiling height needs to increase in proportion to an increase in the size of a room. 7. Facilities to provide total black-out within each room. 8. A reflective surface on one wall of each small room for projection. 9. Full climate control. 10. Acoustics: maximum of 1.5 seconds averaged over the one octave frequency bands from 125kHz to 8kHz. 11. Isolation between meeting rooms to be a minimum of 53dB (with field test results better than 5dB below the laboratory performance). 12. Lighting with a minimum of 500 lux dimmable between 3% and 100%. 13. Upholstered seating with a minimum seat width of 55cm (65cm for VIP seating). 14. Minimum row space of 85-90cm but 95cm preferred. 15. Easy entry/exit double doors with peep holes. 16. Entry/exit doors which open and close silently. 17. Loop for hearing impaired. 18. Storage space for chairs not in use. 19. In tiered auditorium able to stage productions, backstage access and depth to stage, allowing performers to enter from wings. 20. Areas/rooms colour coded. 21. Interpretation facilities (including cabling and connections) which in an auditorium should be built-in and meet the requirements of AIIC.

KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water and glasses as standard set up for all meetings. 2. Tap water served in jugs rather than serving bottled water (to minimise expense and plastic waste). 3. Re-set after each use. 4. Plans for set up for standard formats (classroom, u-shape, theatre, etc.) which are comfortable, i.e. not maximum capacities.
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ELEMENT H2	MEETING ROOMS – FITTINGS AND FURNITURE
<p>COMMENTARY: The use to which different meeting rooms are to be put, and the design of those rooms, creates a range of choices for seating. In tiered theatre style rooms, where attendees may spend comparatively short periods of time, fixed or retractable chairs may be a preferred option. In rooms with level floors, flexibility of use may suggest easily moved and stackable chairs, whilst ergonomic considerations may call for quite different design alternatives.</p>	
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easily removable and ergonomically designed chairs. 2. Chairs with retractable lecture tables in auditoria. 3. Tiered and retractable seating able to be retracted quickly (1 hour). 4. Choice of circular, standard trestle, or narrow (18 inches or 46cm) tables for classroom layout. 5. Chairs which are comfortable and meet safety standards. 6. Stairs for stage access including hand rails. 7. Stage modules of varying heights including ramp access for disabled use. 8. Doors which open and close easily and silently.
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up to allow sufficient space between rows for comfortable entry and exit. 2. All furniture should be strong and lightweight for easy moving. 3. Clearly advertise any furniture charges in the initial proposal. Detail these costs in the venue contract.

ELEMENT H3	MEETING ROOMS – SERVICES
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Height adjustable lectern with a flat surface space sufficient to take laptop, notes and water. 2. Tracks or other fittings around perimeter of ceiling for hanging backdrops and a grid of hooks on ceiling for hanging banners/signs. 3. Generally flexible audio visual and production arrangements – see Audio Visual Services and Production Elements. 4. Normal and multi phase power access in multiple configurations – see Power Services Element. 5. Wireless data facilities. 6. Natural light. 7. Rooms able to be completely blacked out easily and quickly. 8. No low hanging light fittings or chandeliers.

ELEMENT I	POSTER AREA – FACILITIES
KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flat floor space. 2. Area located very close to exhibition area with easy traffic flow between the spaces. 3. Ceiling height – ideally no lower than 3.6m. 4. Easy access for build-up and breakdown of poster boards. 5. Good overhead lighting (which can be mobile) to eliminate the need for individual poster boards to be lit. 6. Plans available which clearly show fire exits and areas in which poster boards can/cannot be located
KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This space can be the same space as used for exhibitions, in which case full exhibition services apply.

ELEMENT J1	PUBLIC SPACES – FACILITIES
<p>COMMENTARY: Public spaces are as important to the viability of a meeting venue as the meeting rooms themselves. They need to accommodate catered functions and to provide the practical needs of attendees in terms of relaxation, information and communications.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Size of each public space relevant to the area which it serves. 2. Combination of large and small areas. 3. Large enough to match the capacity of adjacent meeting rooms and allow easy networking, and large enough for service of food and drinks if necessary. 4. Easily adaptable for a variety of uses. 5. Minimum ceiling height of 3.6m. 6. Daylight. 7. Different style from meeting rooms so that attendees feel they are getting a break. 8. Convenient access to kitchens for food service. 9. Clearly signed dedicated meeting points. 10. Good signage system. 11. Easy access to external areas. 12. Casual seating in a variety of configurations from small and intimate to larger open plan. 13. Built in cloakroom facilities – large enough to cater for biggest audience (including baggage storage on the last day of congress). 14. Restrooms with facilities to provide for a fully utilised Centre. 15. Public address system which can include all foyers or be isolated for particular areas. 16. Information desk with direct taxi lines. 17. Room which can be used as a prayer room. 18. Taxi phone. 19. Venue reception desk (if required). 20. External box office, i.e. separated from the meeting areas. This avoids the need for public access when the venue is closed for private use.

<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'As built' floor plans with accurate dimensions. 2. Public transport information and other useful local information which is regularly updated. 3. Convenient access to storage for chairs and other furniture. 4. Coordinating the schedules of different meetings to minimise congestion. 5. Rubbish bins and ashtrays in areas where smoking permitted. 6. Comfortable casual seating with adjacent tables. 7. Mobile bars/catering stations.
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ELEMENT J2	PUBLIC SPACES – SERVICES
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natural light where possible, elsewhere good lighting with dimmers, allowing flexibility. 2. Reliable PA system to all foyers for announcements. 3. Ready access to ample toilets, public telephones, post boxes and drinking water. 4. Rigging points in ceilings and on walls for banners and signs. 5. Easily accessible and flexible and focusable lights. 6. Separate ventilation system in areas where smoking permitted.

ELEMENT K	EXHIBITION
<p>COMMENTARY: The exhibition area of a convention becomes the networking hub. Catering is served here, internet facilities are set up and ideally poster boards are in place immediately adjacent or within. Sometimes registration is set up at the entrance to the exhibition.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimum ceiling height of 8m but preferably 10m. 2. Minimum live load capacity of 50KN/m². 3. Dividers to reduce the size of exhibition space as required. 4. Electricity, water and data connections available to every stand. 5. Direct access for deliveries which is clearly marked. 6. Minimum overall lighting of 400 lux. 7. Hard wearing floor covering in a neutral shade. 8. Neutral wall finishes. 9. Foyer for exhibitor and exhibition visitor registration. 10. Room for use as an exhibitors' lounge which is adjacent to the exhibition area. 11. Storage area for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) exhibitors' display materials delivered prior to the event (b) packaging materials during the exhibition (c) some exhibitors' display materials ready for dispatch post exhibition 12. Exhibition organiser's office.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Porters during build-up and breakdown to assist exhibitors as required. 2. Readily available trolleys for exhibitors' use. 3. Delivery of exhibitors' consignments accurately recorded and able to be readily located. 4. Providing access to organisers, e.g. swipe card valid for the duration of the hire.

ELEMENT L	SAFETY
<p>COMMENTARY: The safety of attendees and others is a primary concern of meeting organisers and venue owners and operators. All safety standards must be adhered to.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non skid floors. 2. Fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, sprinklers and alarms including visual system for the deaf or hard of hearing. 3. Clearly marked safety routes, emergency lights and exit signs. 4. Materials selected for fire rating. 5. Evacuation warning information system (visual as well as audio).
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First aid room containing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. bed ii. first aid kit iii. oxygen bottle and mask iv. wheelchair v. basic medications vi. telephone numbers of ambulance, hospital, doctor, clearly display vii. instructions on resuscitation clearly displayed. 2. Laminated card for organisers outlining safety/evacuation procedures. 3. Nurse on staff or at least a designated minimum number of staff members with St. John ambulance training and who are designated first aid officers. 4. Advise clients of nominated fire wardens. 5. Portable exit signs for dividable rooms.

ELEMENT M	SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES
	<p>COMMENTARY: Every building and the activities conducted within it have an ecological impact. Good design minimises that impact, improves the quality of life, thermal comfort, health and safety of the building's occupants and has the potential to markedly reduce operating costs. Facilities should be designed to achieve an optimal level of energy and utility conservation.</p> <p>A comprehensive review of the available design and operation alternatives which go to the minimisation of that impact is beyond this Guide. Expert assistance is available from specialist consultants. Some suggestions are made below.</p>
<p>KEY DESIGN PRINCIPALS AND OBJECTIVES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To achieve ecologically sustainable development 2. To use renewable energy sources and store energy and water where possible 3. To reduce greenhouse gases to minimize pollution and avert climate change 4. To reduce energy and water consumption 5. To minimise waste to landfill through appropriate selection of materials and recycling
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – SHOULD ATTEMPT TO</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimise internal areas requiring mechanical ventilation 2. Minimise direct solar heat gain, in order to minimize air conditioning/ comfort cooling energy 3. Maximise daylight factors in appropriate areas 4. Maximise the efficiency of plant and systems 5. Maximise the control and flexibility of the building systems and services 6. Maximise energy efficiency 7. Maximise water efficiency 8. Provide good indoor environment quality and environmental protection 9. Minimise waste
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Energy efficient appliances. 2. Energy management systems. 3. Recycling systems of occupant wastes including paper and grey water. 4. Flow control devises on all outlet fixtures. 5. Demand flushing on toilet fixtures. 6. Non chemical water treatment methods for mechanical ventilation systems. 7. Separate receptacles for different kinds of waste e.g. glass, paper, plastic.

ELEMENT N	SECURITY
<p>COMMENTARY: Security for attendees is increasingly a concern for meeting organisers, as is assured delivery of meeting and exhibition materials and equipment. This Element draws together the key references to Security contained in other Elements of the Guide.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Safety and Security Committee of the International Association of Congress Centres (www.aipc.org) and the Healthcare Congress Alliance (IPCAA, IAPCO, HCEA) Safety and Security at Congresses document (www.iapco.org) are consulted.</p>	
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Security management systems including camera surveillance at loading docks. 2. All parking should be secure. 3. Lock up facility at registration desk for storage of computers and other equipment.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manager/security guard contactable direct by phone. 2. Dockmaster contactable direct. 3. Security system for VIP entry and departure. 4. 24-hour access for meeting organisers through security or card-key or other prior arrangement. 5. Evacuation plan, and plan for prevention and/or limitation of criminal or terrorist activity (visual as well as audio). 6. Clearly advertise security charges in the initial proposal. Detail these costs in the venue contract.

ELEMENT O	VENUE MANAGEMENT
<p>COMMENTARY: Excellent service delivery is an important consideration when a client is selecting a venue. Not only does it mean a comprehensive knowledge amongst management and sales staff of the facilities and how they can be adapted to each convention, it also means an anticipation of clients' requirements and a willingness to ensure every aspect runs smoothly.</p>	
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quotes provided in writing which include date availability and all hire costs, i.e. no hidden extras. 2. Contracts issued once the quote is accepted and dates confirmed. 3. Sales literature available which includes accurate capacity charts. 4. Accessible staff who are well-trained, polite, friendly and willing. 5. Clear policy about third parties being engaged to provide goods and services within the venue, e.g. external audio-visual company. 6. New staff members wear a training badge and are accompanied by a senior staff member. 7. As a courtesy ask permission from the PCO if another PCO wishes to conduct a site visit while a conference is in progress. 8. Provide a single point of contact with the venue staff. 9. Brief venue staff that, if a PCO is involved, the PCO is the point of contact, not the client. 10. Only promise what you know works well in your venue. 11. Suggest ideas for what works well in your venue.

ELEMENT P	OTHER
<p>KEY DESIGN CRITERIA – PROVIDE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An acoustics environment within the occupied areas of the venue which complies with the country's requirements. 2. Storage for furniture located near meeting rooms, with vinyl flooring and vinyl to walls to a minimum level above floor of 900mm, and lockable doors. 3. Recreation and fitness facilities within venues which include accommodation.
<p>KEY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS – CONSIDER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilities for attendees not staying in house, modeled on airline club facilities including tea/coffee/biscuits, phones, storage for baggage and work spaces. 2. Child care facilities.

List of Members

A full list of members, including all contact details, is available on the IAPCO website

Reference Documents

All IAPCO documents and guidelines can be obtained from IAPCO or from the IAPCO website to assist in the planning of your event.

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