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Winning the Bid:

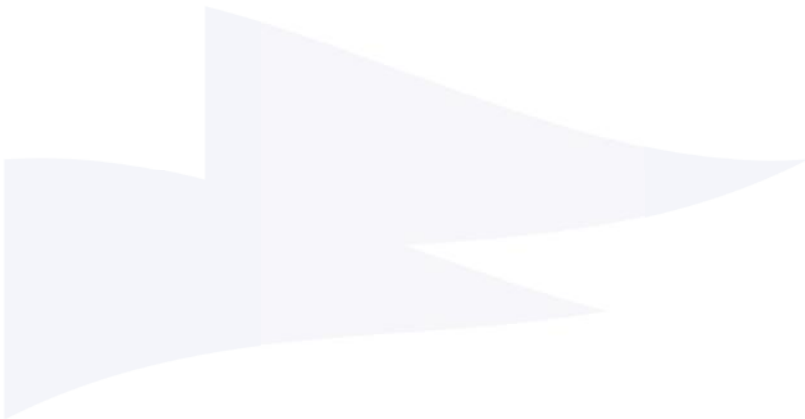
A Rights Holder's Guide to Event Bidding
and Site Selection

Presented by



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Executive Summary

Selecting the right host destination is one of the most consequential decisions a rights holder makes. The performance of an event, from financial outcomes and operational execution to participant satisfaction and long-term growth, is directly tied to the strength of the host partner and the broader destination ecosystem.

As the sports tourism industry becomes more competitive, destinations are investing heavily in facilities, incentives, and infrastructure. At the same time, participant expectations continue to rise, with athletes, families, and sponsors demanding seamless, high-quality experiences. This dynamic has shifted the role of rights holders from simply awarding events to actively managing a portfolio of host partnerships.

The challenge is no longer identifying destinations willing to host your event. It is selecting partners who can consistently deliver, scale with your growth, and enhance your event's brand over time. This white paper provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating bids and selecting host destinations. It outlines key considerations, evaluation criteria, and strategic approaches that help rights holders reduce risk, maximize impact, and build long-term success.



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1

The Evolving Landscape of Event Bidding

The event bidding process has undergone a significant transformation. What was once a transactional exchange has become a strategic, multi-dimensional decision that impacts every aspect of an event's success.



KEY INDUSTRY SHIFTS

1. From Transactions to Partnerships

Rights holders are increasingly prioritizing destinations that act as true partners—organizations that bring ideas, resources, and long-term commitment to the table. This shift is especially important as events become more complex and growth-oriented.

2. Increased Competition Among Destinations

Destinations are more sophisticated than ever in their approach to bidding. Many now offer comprehensive proposals that include detailed operational plans, marketing support, financial incentives, and customized experiences tailored to specific events.

3. Higher Expectations from Participants and Stakeholders

Participants are evaluating events not just on competition quality, but on the full experience—ease of travel to the destination and within the city, accommodations, amenities, and overall enjoyment. Sponsors and partners are also expecting greater visibility, engagement, and return on investment.

4. Operational Complexity and Risk Management

Events are growing in size and complexity, often involving multiple venues, divisions, and stakeholders. This increases the importance of selecting destinations that can actively manage logistics efficiently and mitigate risk through added financial and manpower support.

5. Emphasis on Measurable Outcomes

Boards, sponsors, and stakeholders are demanding clear metrics to evaluate event success. Rights holders must be able to demonstrate attendance growth, economic impact, participant satisfaction, and overall ROI.

In this environment, site selection is no longer a one-time decision, it is a strategic lever that directly impacts the trajectory of an event.

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2

Building a Strong Bid Evaluation Strategy

A structured evaluation process is essential for making consistent, informed decisions. Without it, rights holders risk selecting destinations based on incomplete information or short-term incentives.

1. PRIORITIZE EVENT-DESTINATION ALIGNMENT

The foundation of a successful event is alignment between the event's needs and the destination's capabilities.

Key Considerations:

- **Facility Fit:** Ensure venues meet current requirements while allowing for expansion. Consider field/court availability, seating capacity, support spaces, and scheduling flexibility.
- **Geographic Strategy:** Evaluate whether the destination supports your geographic rotation strategy or helps you access new markets.
- **Audience Accessibility:** Consider travel time, cost, and convenience for your core audience. Proximity to major population centers can significantly impact participation.
- **Event Profile Match:** Align the destination's brand with your event's identity. For example, a high-performance championship event may require a different setting than a grassroots participation event.
- **Seasonal Compatibility:** Weather, competing events, and tourism patterns should align with your event's calendar.

A strong fit reduces operational challenges and increases the likelihood of participant satisfaction and repeat attendance.



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2. DEMAND DATA AND VALIDATE PERFORMANCE

Data should be at the center of every site selection decision. However, not all data is created equal.

Key Considerations:

- **Historical Event Data:** Request metrics from comparable events hosted in the destination, including attendance, registration trends, room nights generated, and post-event performance reports. Require host organizations to provide verified post-event data to measure outcomes and support future evaluation and planning.
- **Participant Insights:** Analyze survey data, satisfaction scores, and retention rates to understand the attendee experience.
- **Benchmarking:** Compare destinations against industry standards to identify outliers and validate claims.
- **Data Integrity:** Understand the source of the data and whether it is independently verified or self-reported.

Best Practices:

Develop a standardized data request template to ensure consistency across all bids and establish post-event reporting requirements for host destinations. Consistent collection of verified performance data allows for more accurate comparisons, reduces bias in decision-making, and creates a stronger foundation for future site selection.

3. CONDUCT A DEEP OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Operational execution is one of the most critical, and often underestimated, factors in site selection.

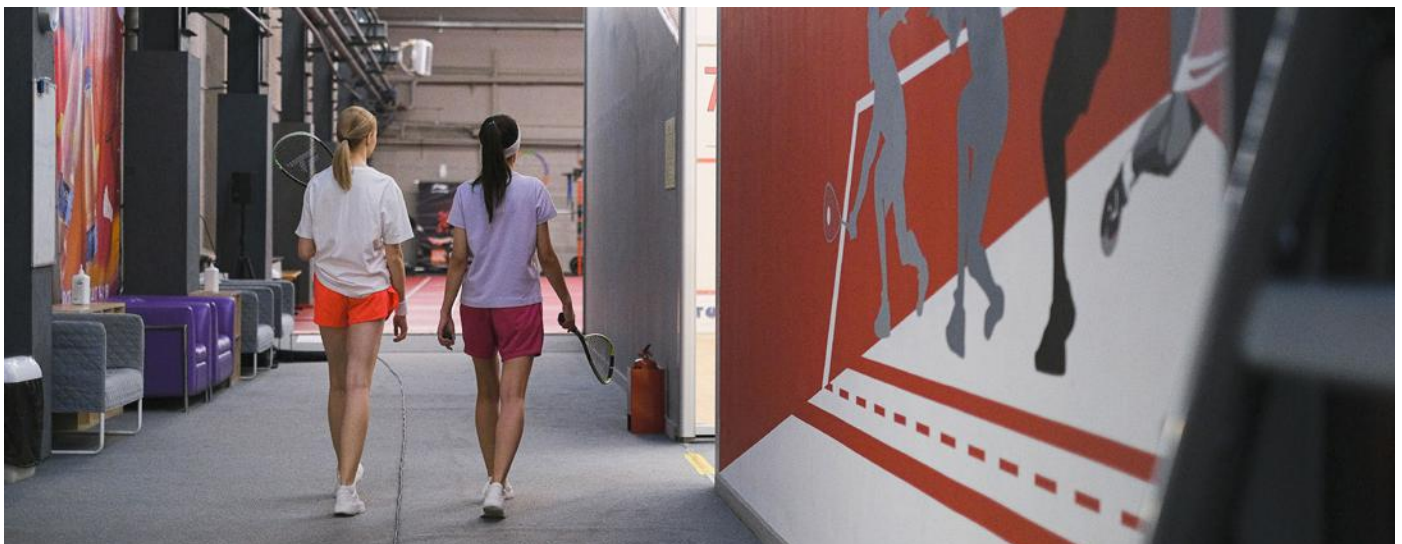
Key Areas to Evaluate:

Staffing and Leadership

- Who will manage the event locally and what specific areas are they responsible for?
- What is their experience with similar events?
- Is there a clear chain of command and accountability structure?

Volunteer Programs

- How are volunteers recruited, trained, and retained?
- Is there a history of strong volunteer engagement?
- What volunteer benefits are expected (meals, apparel, parking)?



Transportation and Logistics

- How efficiently can participants move between airports, hotels, and venues?
- Are there existing shuttle systems or transportation partners?

Venue Operations

- What meal options are offered onsite?
- Are venues staffed and maintained at the level required for your event and participants?
- Is there experience managing multi-field or multi-site events?
- Who is the onsite contact?
- Is medical on-site provided?

Risk Management

- What contingency plans are in place for weather, emergencies, or disruptions?
- How does the destination communicate and respond to issues in real time?
- Where are the closest hospitals and emergency facilities?

Best Practices:

Conduct site visits that go beyond facilities and focus on operational flow. Understanding how an event will function on the ground is critical. Meet as many on-site contacts as possible.



A destination's ability to align stakeholders is a strong indicator of execution success.



4. ASSESS STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT AND COMMITMENT

A destination's ability to align stakeholders is a strong indicator of execution success.

Key Considerations:

- **Hotel Partnerships:** Are hotels committed to room blocks, pricing agreements, and participant experience?
- **Venue Coordination:** Are venues aligned on scheduling, operations, and expectations? What are the associated costs?
- **Government Support:** Is there backing from local or regional authorities, particularly for large-scale events?
- **Private Sector Engagement:** Are local businesses and sponsors committed to supporting the event?
- **Communication Structure:** Is there a centralized point of contact coordinating all stakeholders?

Warning Sign:

Fragmented communication or unclear ownership across stakeholders can lead to operational challenges and inconsistent execution.

5. EVALUATE THE FULL EVENT EXPERIENCE

The overall experience plays a significant role in participant satisfaction and long-term event growth.

Key Considerations:

Proximity and Convenience

- Are hotels, venues, and amenities located close to each other?
- Can participants easily navigate the destination?

Destination Appeal

- Does the location offer dining, entertainment, and attractions that enhance the experience?
- Is it a destination that participants are excited to visit?

Family and Spectator Experience

- Are there activities and amenities for families and non-participants?
- Does the destination support extended stays?

Sponsor and VIP Opportunities

- Are there premium experiences or unique venues that can be leveraged for sponsors and partners?

Technology and Communication

- What tools does the destination provide for wayfinding, communication, and engagement?

Best Practices:

Think beyond logistics and evaluate how the destination contributes to the emotional and experiential value of your event.



3 | Site Selection: A Structured Decision Framework

To ensure consistency and objectivity, rights holders should implement a structured evaluation framework.



CORE EVALUATION CATEGORIES

1. Facilities and Infrastructure (25–30%)

- Quality, capacity, and flexibility of venues
- Ability to support growth and multi-year hosting

2. Hotels and Accommodations (20–25%)

- Inventory, proximity, and pricing
- Quality and consistency across properties

3. Accessibility and Transportation (15–20%)

- Airlift and drive market access
- Ease of movement within the destination

4. Financial Value (10–15%)

- Incentives, rebates, and cost structure
- Transparency and alignment with event goals

5. Experience and Destination Appeal (10–15%)

- Entertainment, dining, and overall attractiveness
- Ability to enhance participant satisfaction

6. Partnership Strength (10–15%)

- Stakeholder alignment
- Long-term collaboration potential

Scoring Best Practices

- Use a standardized scoring matrix across all destinations
- Include both quantitative scores and qualitative notes
- Involve multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process
- Revisit scores after site visits or additional data review

A structured framework improves decision quality and provides clear justification for final selections.

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COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

Even experienced rights holders can make avoidable mistakes during the bidding and site selection process.

1. Overvaluing Financial Incentives

While incentives can offset costs, they should not outweigh operational capability or participant experience. Poor execution can quickly negate financial benefits.

2. Relying Too Heavily on Projections

Projected numbers are often optimistic. Without historical validation, they should be treated with caution.

3. Underestimating Operational Complexity

Logistics challenges—transportation, scheduling, staffing—can significantly impact the success of an event.

4. Inconsistent Evaluation Criteria

Evaluating destinations using different standards makes comparisons unreliable and can lead to suboptimal decisions.

5. Ignoring Long-Term Fit

Selecting a destination that cannot grow with your event may limit future opportunities and require frequent relocation.

6. Skipping or Rushing Site Visits

On-the-ground insights often reveal critical details not captured in bid documents.

Avoiding these pitfalls requires discipline, structure, and a commitment to thorough evaluation.



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4 | Looking Ahead: The Future of Site Selection

The site selection process will continue to evolve as industry expectations and capabilities advance.



EMERGING TRENDS

Integrated Event Districts

Destinations offering centralized, multi-use districts will gain a competitive advantage by simplifying logistics and enhancing experience.

Multi-Year Strategic Partnerships

Rights holders will continue to prioritize destinations that can support long-term growth and provide consistency.

Advanced Analytics Integration

Rights holders will increasingly use predictive analytics to evaluate destinations and forecast performance.

Technology-Driven Experiences

Digital tools will play a larger role in participant engagement, communication, and event delivery.

Sustainability and Social Impact

Environmental responsibility and community engagement will become more prominent factors in decision-making.

Adapting to these trends will be essential for maintaining a competitive edge.

Destinations offering centralized, multi-use districts will gain a competitive advantage by simplifying logistics and enhancing experience.



5

Conclusion

Site selection is one of the most important strategic decisions a rights holder makes. The right destination does more than host your event—it enhances your brand, supports your growth, and delivers an experience that keeps participants coming back.

By implementing a structured evaluation process, prioritizing alignment and execution, and focusing on long-term partnerships, rights holders can make more informed decisions and reduce risk.

As the industry continues to evolve, those who approach bidding and site selection with discipline and strategy will be best positioned to succeed.

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Sports ETA

As the non-profit 501(c)3 trade association for the sports events and tourism industry in the United States, Sports ETA is the most essential resource for sports commissions, sports destinations, sports event owners, and industry partners. We believe sports tourism and the events that our members own and host have the power to transform society for the better. Our passion is to help sports events and tourism professionals achieve previously unimaginable levels of performance. We do this by nurturing a community of smart, creative, and interesting people: our members. Visit SportsETA.org.

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