

# Events Planning Framework

An event type decision making framework for planning ACEC-BC events and meetings.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This resource provides an event type decision making framework that will be used by the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies – British Columbia (ACEC-BC) when planning events and meetings. It will assist us with the selection of event delivery type, considering the event objectives and purpose, and providing guidance on steps for effective planning and delivery. Event types include in person, virtual, hybrid, coordinated locations, and alternative content delivery options.

The events of the past two years have catalyzed drastic changes in how our Association, our industry, and the entire world connects and learns. There has been a significant shift to virtual events, necessitated by public health requirements. As these requirements and restrictions are removed, we have greater choice in the event type options, but we also have new considerations for selecting event types. People have changed their priorities, technology has advanced, and the way the world works has change. These new considerations mean we cannot return to our events delivery approach that existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; **we must develop a new approach for making decisions about events and how we deliver them.**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022/2023	Future
In Person						
Virtual						
Hybrid						
Coordinated Locations						

This framework will provide guidance and a process for use in support of the decision-making process as well as event planning. The framework will walk event organizations and decision makers through a series of questions, identify considerations that should be assessed as part of the decision-making process, and providing a recommended event type.

The framework integrates with the existing ACEC-BC Communications Strategy as well as committee and member on-boarding processes. The intersectional and inclusive approach to the framework is informed by the ACEC-BC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy which focuses on relevance and applicability to our members and industry.

## 1.1 APPROACH

Planning and selecting the delivery type of events now requires consideration of a range of new factors, including:

- Changes in technology that offer and support different delivery methods
- Mass adoption of the use of virtual meeting tools and equipment, meaning that most individuals are now set up to access online meetings with adequate software and hardware such as mic/speakers and cameras
- Changes to personal preferences in event formats that people are willing to attend
- Changes to organisational preferences in the types of events they will support their people attending

Recognizing the complexity of new factors influencing decision making about event types, it was apparent that any new framework created to support the decision making and event planning process needed to be able to consider and include the diverse factors and considerations.

**Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** is an analytical process that can be used to examine and identify potential impacts on particular groups of people. Although the term gender is included in the title, the “plus” has been added for inclusion of a range of identity factors. An intersectional analysis process, GBA Plus challenges assumptions and uncovers different perspectives to identify impacts and opportunities that should be considered. GBA Plus provides an effective approach to both develop and inform the structure of this framework. The process was used to develop the framework and is embedded into it’s structure, resulting in GBA Plus being applied each time the framework is used to assess and plan an event or meeting.

To learn more about GBA Plus, see **Appendix E**.

## 1.2 VALUES ALIGNMENT

Values unite members of ACEC-BC. Our members and our governance act collaboratively, promote innovative thinking, and investment in our community. Our words and actions ensure an inclusive environment, celebrating our diversity and striving for equity in all that we do.

These values guide all that we do, including the planning and deliver of events and meetings. Focusing on these values, particularly those of equity, inclusiveness and innovation, we have developed this framework to ensure that the events





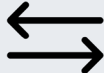


and meetings we deliver continue to align with our values: reaching as many members as possible from around the province.

### 1.3 EVENT TYPES

The framework is intended to be used by ACEC-BC to plan events and meetings. The event and meeting types can range and include conferences, professional development, networking events, committee meetings, and more.

Five different event types have been identified as possible options for delivery.

	Type	Description
	In Person	Traditional event type with all people attending in person in same location.
	Virtual	All people join virtually; no physical location for the event.
	Hybrid	Some people join virtually while others are in person at a physical location.
	Coordinated Locations	Several physical locations for people to join regionally. Event has common component such as broadcast presentation combined with location specific component such as networking.
	No Event	Selecting a different way to achieve the purpose and objectives.

ACEC-BC events range in type and function. Event types and functions can include, but are not limited to, conferences, celebrations, professional development, networking, policy development, and more. In addition to events, ACEC-BC committees, working groups, and the Board hold a number of different meeting types, including regular update meetings, annual general meeting, strategic planning and critical decision making, retreats, and more.

These different event and meetings, as with different purposes and functions should use this framework to evaluate and identify appropriate event delivery options. Event and meeting organizers can use their judgement to determine how and when to apply this framework. It is expected that it will be used each time a unique event or meeting is organized. However, in the case of reoccurring or regular events or meetings, the organizers may apply the framework on an annual basis and apply the results to all events or meetings in that year. For example, the Young Professionals Group may choose to run through the framework for a typical professional development event and use the outputs from that analysis to other similar events throughout a given year.

## 1.4 CONSIDERATIONS FOR USERS

For individuals or groups using this framework the following should be considered:

### 1. Approach the process with an open mind.

This framework was created to facilitate a different approach to decision making about event types. It's effectiveness is directly correlated to your willingness to approach the framework process with an open mind. If you have already decided what event type you want, you will follow the process that leads to that result. For this process to be effective, focus on the process and allow the framework to guide you in the decision making process.

### 2. Technology will change.

Guidance is provided within this framework about technology options with different event types based on information available at the time that this resource was created. If you know of new or different technology that is not included here and think it may be appropriate for your event, please tell us about it.

### 3. Proper planning and preparation are critical to event success, regardless of the event type.

The selection of event type is important, but the guidance of how to effectively deliver the events (**Section 5**) is also critical. Any event can be more or less effective depending on planning and preparation, regardless of the event type.

## 2.0 INPUT SOURCES

In addition to the ACEC-BC Communications and EDI Strategies, this framework is informed by a number of input sources and information that was gathered in the development of this resource. These include:

- Input gathered through a series of consultation sessions with diverse range of individuals representing different committees, member firms, varying engagement levels with ACEC-BC, geographic location, career stage, and area of practice. These individuals also represented a range of diverse personal identities including factors such as age and gender.
- ACEC-BC events data that has been measured and tracked over the past five years.
- Feedback received from ACEC-BC events over the past three years, including post-event surveys and informal feedback received from members, clients, and other attendees.
- Review of articles, publications, and reports related to virtual, in person, and hybrid events, examining topics of benefits, challenges, successes and best practices as well as studies revealing preferences and impressions of people for different event types.
- Information gathered from thought leaders in the events industry who are developing and defining new ways of hosting events using new technologies and event formats, including Engineers and Geoscientists BC, Vancouver Board of Trade, Adobe, Hopin, Dell, and more.

### 2.1 ACEC-BC EVENTS DATA

In developing this framework, the team analysed events data collected by ACEC-BC between 2018 and 2022. The purpose of this review was to understand how the changes in event type have impacted audience engagement and ACEC-BC's reach.

The forced transition from in-person to virtual events in 2020 had a profound impact on engagement and connection with event participants. Participant data showed that while fewer events were produced, more and different people participated. Key findings from the analysis were (between 2018/2019 and 2020/2021):

- Total participation in events increased by about 50%, while the total number of events decreased by about 50% (more people).
- The increase in participation for virtual events was the result of new people joining events rather than the same people joining multiple events (different people).
- ACEC-BC virtual events were more engaging for client participants, with the proportion of event participants from client organizations increasing by 50%.
- Virtual events were less engaging for Associate members, with event participation by Associate members declining by about 50%.
- Engagement of members outside the Lower Mainland region increased during the period 2020 to 2022, demonstrated through an increase in participants accessing events and individuals signing up to receive ACEC-BC information email.

Changes to event management practices and tools have increased our use of data to inform discussion and will continue to be utilised to support us to better understand our audience. Data is one element supporting use of this framework and can be referenced where appropriate to understand the target audience.

## 2.2 VIRTUAL EVENTS EXPERIENCE

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced many organizations, including ACEC-BC, to rapidly shift from majority in-person events to all virtual events. The shift to virtual events has provided opportunity to identify and realize both opportunities and challenges with virtual events delivery. Key findings include:

- Opportunities
  - Greater participation from members across the province, removing the barrier of travel for those located in different regions.
  - Greater participation from different members, clients, and non-members who had not previously attended in-person events.
  - Increased access to speakers and presenters who did not have to (or could not) travel to deliver presentations or participate in panel discussions, resulting in a more diverse group of speakers and presenters, representing different regions and areas of practice.
  - Ability to record events so that people can view the content at a time that is convenient for them.
  - Reduced climate impact – virtual events allowed attendees to make informed choices about where and when they travel.
  - Better analytics and data that can be used to assess and make improvements to future events.
  - Availability of accessibility features such as closed captioning.
  - Increased accessibility: virtual events made it possible to accommodate individuals who were limited by transportation, finances, physical limitations, or life circumstances.
  - Increased flexibility: the reduced planning time required for hosting virtual event allowed the Association to host and participate in various events and discussions.
  - Significantly lower costs associated with hosting events
  - Introduced new and more effective branding / awareness opportunities for sponsors
- Challenges
  - Virtual events may not easily offer an environment for casual social interaction as part of or directly before/after the event.
  - Technology learning curve for attendees / issues with technology not working properly (although this is rare).
  - Attendees are more likely to be distracted by other work, phones, and email.

## 2.3 CONSULTATION SESSIONS SUMMARY

Key findings from the consultation sessions:

- That past two years have changed many things for many people.
  - This includes personal factors such as where they live, their family structure, and changes to approach to work/life balance. This also includes what people value in events and what they are willing to participate in. This is also true of organizations that have recognized that there are different ways for their people to attend and participate in events.



- Quality over quantity.
  - There are an overwhelming number of events available for people to attend on a range of topics in a variety of formats. Selecting which events to attend and participate in is determined by the quality of the event. Holding high quality events on relevant topics is more impactful than holding a large number of events.
- Planning is critical.
  - Regardless of the event type, event quality is key to success. Planning and preparation are critical to delivering high quality events.
- Event purpose and objectives are critical inputs to determining the most suitable event type.
  - Consultation discussions revealed that certain event types are best for meeting certain objectives, emphasizing the importance of clearly identifying and remaining focused on the primary purpose and objectives of the event.

### 3.0 USING THIS RESOURCE

The framework consists of two components: event type evaluation and event type logistics.

The **event type evaluation** is used to assist event organizers to

- ▶ Identify event purpose and objectives
- ▶ Identify and understand the audience
- ▶ Assess appropriate event delivery types that meet the event objectives and audience needs

The **event logistics process** is used to assist event organizers to

- ▶ Understand the event planning timeline and actions within that timeline
- ▶ Define key event information required for event planning and delivery

#### 3.1 EVENT TYPE EVALUATION

The event type evaluation is structured to guide event organizers through a process of assessment, generating inputs to the evaluation process, and leading to event type recommendation(s) as the output.

The facilitation and assessment questions of the framework provides the structure to assess and support identification of the most appropriate event delivery method(s) for a given event or meeting. The event type assessment is structured such that there are two parts:

1. A series of facilitation questions that the event organizers will use to identify key information about the event and to explore different considerations for the event.
2. Assessment questions that are used to support the evaluation of the most suitable event delivery methods(s).

#### 01 Facilitated Questions

**Frequency:** Unique event types, at least annually.

- ? Event Organizers
- i Facilitation Questions

#### 02 Assessment Questions

**Frequency:** Every time an event is planned.

- ? Event Organizers
- i Assessment Questions

#### 03 Evaluation

**Frequency:** Every time an event is planned.

- ? Event Organizers
- i Event Guidance

#### 04 Event Type Recommendation

**Frequency:** Every time an event is planned.

**OUTPUT**

These two components are intended to be used together, with the facilitated questions creating dialogue and discussion for the event organizers to obtain clarity about the event, leading to the inputs to the assessment questions.

The facilitated questions process may take some time and may require that the event organizers consult others and look for input and feedback. The effort put into exploring the facilitated questions will directly correlate to the effectiveness of this framework. The questions are intended to uncover various considerations and perspectives, to identify factors that may not have been initially considered and help event organizers gain improved clarity.

The [facilitation questions](#) are structured such that event organizers can record their discussion and answers in the worksheet. Event organizers should keep a copy of this worksheet but are not expected to submit it to ACEC-BC staff.

The facilitation questions may not need to be completed every time, if events are similar. For example, the Young Professionals Group may complete the facilitated process once and use the same worksheet for similar events, reviewing the facilitated questions on an annual basis.

The [assessment questions](#) must be completed for each event. The assessment questions should be completed by event organizers after completing the facilitated questions, using the responses generated through the facilitated questions process. These responses will be inputs for the evaluation process.

The evaluation guidance component of the event type evaluation has been developed to provide recommended event type(s) based on the inputs provided through the assessment questions. The evaluation guidance will support event organizers with the assessment of all event types.

Recognizing that this tool is based on a structured set of inputs, it is possible that there will be certain circumstances where specific information about the event or meeting may not be able to be accurately captured through the tool that may influence or change the recommended event type(s). If event organizers feel that specific information may change the recommended event type, ACEC-BC will consider this additional information. It is recognized that there are cases where different inputs must be considered.

The evaluation resource is available [here](#).

### **3.2 EVENTS LOGISTICS**

The events logistics section of this framework will assist event planners with understanding of timelines and actions required for the different event types. This section of the framework also identifies key information required to support event planning and logistics.

This section of the framework is structured by event type and provides information related to requirements from ACEC-BC, timeline, and technology. Users of this framework will find that the events logistics information is organized by event type.

Selecting the right event type is critical, but successful events require much more: planning and delivery are critical to event success, regardless of format. ACEC-BC has identified a number of effective practices to delivering events that are engaging, effective, and valuable. Within the event logistics section of this framework includes key considerations for successful events are provided with each event type.

## APPENDIX A: GBA PLUS

GBA Plus, or Gender Based Analysis Plus, was developed by the Federal Government as an analytical process that can be used to examine and identify potential impacts of projects or programs on particular groups of people. Although the term gender is included in the title, the “plus” has been added for inclusion of a range of identity factors. GBA Plus applies intersectional analysis and can be applied to a range of projects and programs. It is used to challenge assumptions and to identify impacts and opportunities that should be considered in the design and delivery of projects and programs as well as in the policies and processes.

### INTRODUCTION TO GBA PLUS

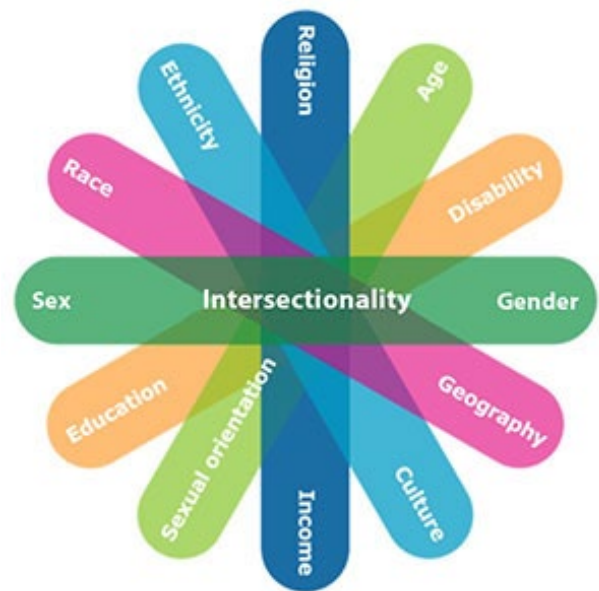
GBA Plus is a process of applying multiple identify factor lenses (see identity factor wheel, **Figure 1**) to our work, with the goal of delivering projects or processes that meet the needs of more users, considering both the final deliverable(s) as well as the project or service delivery process. GBA Plus can also be applied to processes and decision making, such as the evaluation and selection of event types.

GBA Plus focuses on diversity and inclusion. These aspects may be considered intuitively, but GBA Plus makes the process explicit, requiring an intentional approach that aims to overcome incorrect assumptions or omissions that can lead to unintended and unequal impacts on particular groups of people.

### INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectional analysis is the foundation of GBA Plus, recognizing the interconnected and overlapping personal identity factors contribute to multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage.

Intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Krenshaw in 1989 to explain intersecting and overlapping social identities that can be both empowering and oppressing. Intersectionality acknowledges the interconnected nature of diversity, which creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage based on a range of identity factors, such as those show in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Identity Factor Wheel**

## GBA PLUS PROCESS

**Figure 2** shows the steps of GBA Plus and illustrates the fact that application of GBA Plus is an iterative process. The diagram also highlights the importance of documentation and communication as part of the evaluation process. Recording and tracking the application of GBA Plus are critical components of the overall success of applying GBA Plus to any decision making process.



**Figure 2: GBA Plus Process**

## IMPORTANCE OF GBA PLUS

GBA Plus can be a powerful tool in the development and delivery of projects and processes, changing how these are delivered with a greater focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Given that one size does not fit all, GBA Plus helps teams consider diverse and intersectional needs and experiences, leading to decisions and actions that are more equitable and inclusive of a range of people, not just those involved in the decisions making process.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about GBA Plus:

<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus.html>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/services-policies-for-government/gender-equity/factsheet-gba.pdf>

<https://canadianequality.ca/gender-based-analysis-plus-gba-plus-blog-series-part-1/>