

“SFA’s extensive knowledge of the association conference market has generated a significant number of quality leads for Visit Belfast and helps to build our conference sales pipeline. They are methodical, reliable, great to work with and a valuable extension of any team!”

Rachael McGuickin,
Director of Business Tourism,
Visit Belfast



Number of delegates
600
Client
Visit Belfast
Date identified by SFA
2012
Date handed over to client
2012
Bid won/confirmed
2014
Year of conference
2016
Economic value to the city
£700,000

Association conferences usually rotate to different parts of the world on a fairly predictable rotational pattern. ICCA, the International Congress and Convention Association, have a database that allows members to search for these association meetings and identify which are likely to come to a destination in the future. SFA’s team have the experience and expertise to quickly identify suitable conferences that could come to a city or destination. They are also particularly skilled at researching and identifying potential local ‘Ambassadors’, gathering crucial information to support a bid and then making introductions on behalf of clients to these individuals. This can be a lengthy and time consuming process but one – when done effectively – offers extremely good return on investment. This is an example of some successful research conducted by SFA.

The Conference

The EAHM is one of the world’s largest hospital management associations representing both the hospital managers of public and private hospitals in the European Union and at international level. They hold an Annual Congress, the location for which is selected by a formal bid process led by local members of the association four years in advance of the meeting. When Visit Belfast originally started talking to the Ambassador about a bid for this Congress they discovered that the local society was not actual a member of the EAHM. But with the support offered through their Ambassador Programme, they were able to help the Ambassador establish membership and join the European committee. Subsequently in 2014, they secured the Congress for the city to take place in 2016.



What did SFA do to help win this?

SFA identified this as a prospect for Belfast in September 2012 and found that the Divisional Director for Northern Ireland at the UK Institute of Healthcare Management was in fact a member of the European Association. She was extremely interested in working with Visit Belfast on a bid but needed to speak with colleagues before taking this any further. SFA gently chased this prospect who then agreed to discuss this further with the EAHM during the 2012 Congress in Athens. Following this, it was agreed that she would work with Visit Belfast on a bid for 2016.



As at October 2014, Visit Belfast have confirmed 21 of SFA’s leads since 2010 worth £16.1M and have a further 76 leads in development worth £77.1M.