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Vision & Intelligence

EVIDENCE BRIEF
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EVIDENCE BRIEF · DESTINATIONS AND IMPACT

Who Owns the Legacy?

How should mega-event legacy be governed?

Legacy is the public case for hosting a mega-event, and it is under pressure: Melbourne withdrew from hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and the Gold Coast 2018 edition cost its host a net 1.862 billion Australian dollars. Case studies of five Games show how legacy is best governed and why it still disappoints host communities.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026 Canada, UK, Australia, Worldwide

4 studies · 2 industry sources

mega-event legacy | legacy governance | Olympic legacy | Commonwealth Games | event leveraging | host city | legacy indicators | event policy | destination competitiveness | major sport events

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KEY FINDING

Legacy is best governed early, by dedicated bodies separate from the organizing committee, bound by written agreements and backed by a political champion. The legacy experts consider most important, community support, is also the hardest to measure, and governance decides whose legacy claims are heard.

Four studies of five Games, 116 interviewees and experts, 2018–2024

Key findings

- **Legacy planning starts before the bid is won.** Vancouver's bid corporation launched a legacy program in 2000 and a dedicated legacy organization in 2001, nearly a decade before the 2010 Olympic Winter Games [1].
- **Separate bodies sustain legacy work.** Legacy organizations at arm's length from the organizing committee, with overlapping directors and binding agreements, sustained legacy work in Vancouver and Toronto, but their influence faded after the Games [1].
- **A political champion creates accountability.** In Glasgow, a dedicated Commonwealth Games and Sport Minister and a legacy board built lasting partnerships between public agencies [2].
- **The most important legacy is the hardest to measure.** An international expert panel rated community support for events the most relevant legacy indicator, at 4.56 out of 5, and the least measurable, at 2.74 [3].
- **Governance decides who benefits.** At the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, contracts and legislation determined whose legacy claims were heard, and small businesses and community groups remained outside [4].

FOR THE MARKET

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Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Venues & destinations	Venues and convention bureaus can track the measurable hosting legacy, such as events won, venue use and international rankings, and add a community measure even if it is imperfect.
Organisers & associations	For destinations and bid teams, a legacy body with its own funding agreement, set up at the bid stage and separate from the organizing committee, gives legacy work continuity beyond the Games.
Investors & advisers	Legacy claims are strongest where governance, funding and evaluation were fixed years before the event. Public funders gain accountability by naming a senior champion and funding evaluation for at least five years after the event.

Legacy as the case for hosting

Legacy is the main public argument for hosting a mega-event. The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games cost the host a net 1.862 billion Australian dollars, and Melbourne later withdrew from hosting the 2026 edition[4]. For destinations, the competition extends beyond the Games themselves: ICCA counted 12,438 rotating international association meetings in 2025, with Lisbon the leading city at 188 meetings[5]. A city's position in such rankings is now proposed as a legacy indicator in its own right[3].

The industry has begun to collect legacy cases. The Iceberg, the knowledge platform of the Joint Meetings Industry Council, gathers legacy and impact stories from congresses and events[6]. A tested model of how legacy should be governed

comes from case studies of five sport mega-events in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

How legacy governance works

The Canadian cases give the clearest model. Vancouver's bid corporation decided in 2000 to use the Games for sport and recreation whatever the bid outcome, and its legacy organization later broadened into arts, literacy, volunteering and inclusion, working with more than 4,000 partner organizations[1]. A provincial tourism consortium gave the tourism industry one voice toward government, the organizing committee, media and sponsors[1].

Overlapping directors between the bodies built trust and access, and binding documents gave the arm's-length organizations legitimacy[1]. The most important was the 2002 Multiparty Agreement with its Legacy Endowment Fund[1]. Toronto built on Vancouver's experience and embedded legacy in regulatory policy; its bid used the word legacy 76 times[1]. With less overlap between bodies, however, its influence faded as the Games ended[1].

Glasgow added political sponsorship. Stakeholders of the 2014 Commonwealth Games credited a dedicated minister who gave legacy political weight, a twin track of delivering the Games and the legacy, and an evaluation framework that ran before, during and after the Games until 2019[2].

YEAR	GAMES	MILESTONE
2000	Vancouver 2010	Bid corporation launches a legacy program regardless of the bid outcome [1]
2001	Vancouver 2010	Dedicated legacy organization created, with directors overlapping the bid corporation [1]
2002	Vancouver 2010	Multiparty Agreement signed, including a Legacy Endowment Fund [1]
2009	Glasgow 2014	City legacy framework: prosperous, active, international, greener, accessible and inclusive [2]
2011	Gold Coast 2018	Host city confirmed, seven years before the 11-day event [4]
2012	Gold Coast 2018	Games legislation in force; contracts bind suppliers and sponsors [4]
2014	Glasgow 2014	National legacy framework and a dedicated Commonwealth Games and Sport Minister [2]
2018	Gold Coast 2018	Seven official partners negotiate one shared legacy list [4]
2019	Glasgow 2014	Legacy monitoring and evaluation ends [2]

Measuring legacy

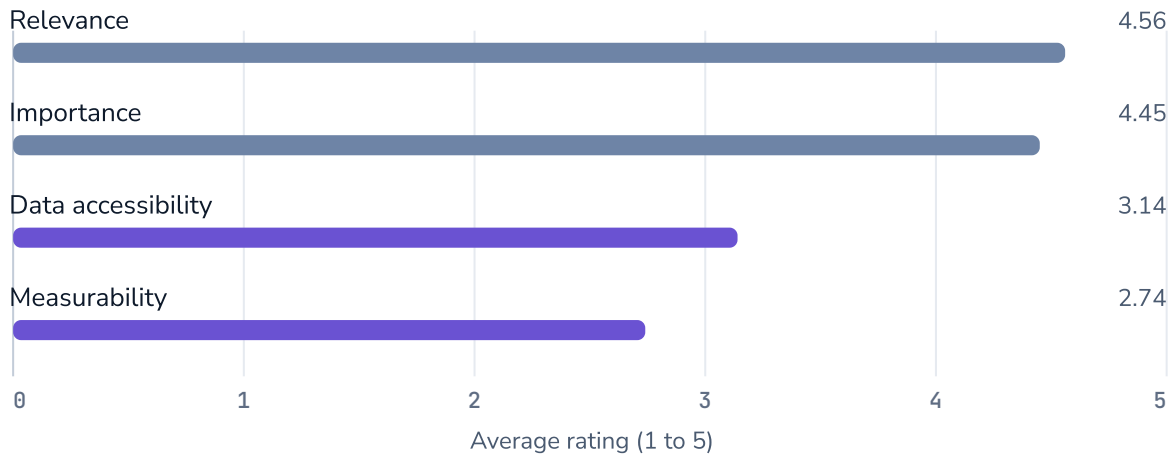
Most stakeholders find legacy hard to define or quantify. In Glasgow, community members did not link local improvements to the Games [2]. An international expert panel developing legacy indicators for host destinations reduced 17 draft indicators to a final set of 12, concentrated on what can be counted: events hosted, venue use, tourist numbers, employment in the events industry, international rankings, awards, strategic bodies and partnerships [3].

Community support for events was rated the most relevant and most important indicator, with average scores of 4.56 and 4.45 out of 5, but the least measurable and the least accessible in terms of data, at 2.74 and 3.14[3]. It was dropped from the final set[3]. A legacy framework built on these indicators reports hosting capacity well and community benefit not at all.

AREA	INDICATORS
Hosting capacity	Other mega-events hosted; major events hosted; profile of events hosted; utilization of event venues[3]
Tourism demand	Total tourist numbers; event tourist numbers[3]
Staffing capacity	People employed in the events industry after the mega-event[3]
Strategy and recognition	Destination-wide events strategy; strategic bodies attracting events; new strategic partnerships and networks; changes in international rankings such as ICCA; awards received[3]

Expert rating of community support for events as a mega-event legacy indicator, by criterion

Average rating on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).



Source: Lockstone-Binney et al. · Release date: 2023 · Region: Worldwide · Number of experts: 39 (round 1); 35 (round 2)

Governance as gatekeeping

Strong governance also decides who is left out. At the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, the international federation relied on host city contracts and legislation that bound suppliers and sponsors[4]. These formal boundaries determined which organizations had a seat at the table[4]. The city council's legacy coordination covered the seven official partners, who negotiated one shared legacy list, while small businesses and community groups lobbied to get a foot in the door[4].

Some reported legacies predated the Games or did not outlast them[4]. The governance of the event sustained a legacy narrative that served event owners and political leaders more than it created lasting benefits for the host community[4].

Notes on the data

The figures are based on four studies published between 2018 and 2024: 31 interviews and 56 documents on Vancouver 2010 and Toronto 2015, 14 interviews on Glasgow 2014, 32 interviews and 27 documents on Gold Coast 2018, and an expert panel of up to 39 members that was predominantly academic[1–4]. The studies examine governance and indicators rather than measured legacy outcomes. All cases are sport mega-events in three high-income countries; no study covers legacy governance for congresses or trade fairs. The grouping of indicators into areas is Eventamin's. The ICCA figures are taken from the publisher's summary.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Wasser, K., Di Lu, L., & Misener, L. (2022). Examining long-term organizational forms surrounding leverage and legacy delivery of Canadian major sport events [Journal article]. *Event Management, 26(6), 1211–1233*. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948390790 First-hand

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5 ICCA. (2026). GlobeWatch country and city rankings 2025 [Article]. Retrieved November 7, 2026, from iccaworld.org Reported

6 Joint Meetings Industry Council. (n.d.). The Iceberg [Website]. Retrieved November 7, 2026, from the-iceberg.org First-hand

The evidence

4 studies · 2 industry sources

SAMPLE

Four studies: 77 stakeholder interviews across four Games and a panel of up to 39 international experts

YEARS

2018–2024 (studies); 2026 (industry data)

METHOD

Case studies of the Vancouver 2010, Glasgow 2014, Toronto 2015 and Gold Coast 2018 Games; expert panel on legacy indicators

About Eventamin

Eventamin reads the peer-reviewed research on events, exhibitions and hospitality, sets it against industry data and states what it means for the market. Every brief is published by Eventamin as an organisation: its sources, method and corrections are open.

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