

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW



OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITIONS

Take world-class thinking. New and exciting discoveries. Exhibits of novel ideas, wondrous feats and challenging endeavours. Add impressive architecture, sustainable buildings and hectares of renewed urban space. Combine with healthy elements of Edmonton's major arts and cultural festivals. Throw in a hundred countries and visitors from around the world. Crown with a theme that tackles an issue of importance to the global community. That's an EXPO.

EXPO is short for a **World Exposition** – or as it's also known, the World's Fair. EXPOs have been organized for nearly 160 years, with the first held in London, England in 1851. Originally developed with a strong focus on trade, the EXPO was made famous for showcasing new inventions and scientific discoveries from around the world.

Today EXPOs join the Olympic Games and World Cup (soccer) as one of the three major world events. EXPOs take place every few years, in different cities around the globe, varying in size and length. Each has a unique theme, offers unique experiences, and generates new information and perspectives for the global community.

Although EXPOs have undergone an evolution over the decades, its original purpose to sharing knowledge by showcasing the extraordinary, the innovative, and the new, continues.

AN EXHIBITION OF KNOWLEDGE FOR OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY.

As the name implies, an EXPO offers exhibits from across the globe – scientific, social, cultural, and more. Like the Olympics, it involves participating countries from around the world, and attracts millions of visitors. While the Olympic Games are a showcase of international sport, an EXPO is a showcase of international knowledge.

What you'll see, do, and experience at an EXPO largely depends on where it's held and what it's about. Each one is unique. But there are some typical elements common to all EXPOs:

Theme – An EXPO always has a theme. Today, it's usually a contemporary topic that has special importance for humanity. The theme of the 2008 EXPO in Zaragoza, Spain is "Water and Sustainable Development." Nearly everything about an EXPO is based on its theme – from exhibits to expert discussions to the buildings and site design.

Exhibits and Pavilions – Countries will set up exhibits, structures, displays and entertainment based on the EXPO theme. Since the purpose of an EXPO is to share knowledge, visitors typically see new technologies and advances, learn new facts and information about their world, discover other countries, and connect with diverse international cultures and perspectives.

Architectural Legacies – A hallmark of an EXPO is the incredible architectural legacy it leaves behind. Some of the world’s memorable buildings, structures and parks have been built for EXPOs. At the completion of an EXPO, some of the infrastructure built for the event remains continuing to contribute to the fabric of the host city. EXPOs occur on sites that are many hectares in size. Depending on the scale and creativity of its development, an EXPO can have a transformational impact on a city’s urban areas. Some of the legacies of EXPOs include:

- The Eiffel Tower in Paris, France
- Balboa Park in San Diego, California
- The Space Needle in Seattle, Washington
- The Skytrain in Vancouver, British Columbia

Descriptions of previous and upcoming EXPOs, including their themes, features and attendance, are contained in Appendix 1.

TYPES OF EXPOS

Today there are two categories of EXPO: registered and recognized.

Registered – A registered EXPO is the larger category of EXPOs. Two registered EXPOs are held every decade, on the years ending in “0” and “5”. The next registered EXPOs will be in Shanghai, China in 2010 and Milan, Italy in 2015. A registered EXPO runs for up to 6 months, can be of unlimited size, and expects between 29 and 70 million visitors.

Recognized – While still a significant undertaking, a recognized EXPO is a scaled-down version. A recognized EXPO is up to 3 months in length, has a maximum site size limit of 25 hectares, and is designed to welcome between 4 and 20 million visitors. Recognized EXPOs are held in the years between registered ones. Zaragoza, Spain hosted the first recognized EXPO under these new regulations in 2008. The next recognized EXPO will be hosted by Yeosu, South Korea in 2012.

Canada has been an active participant in EXPOs, and has hosted two: Montreal in 1967, and Vancouver in 1986. The categories of EXPO have changed over the years, but by today’s standards both previous EXPOs in Canada were the larger “registered” EXPOs.

THE BID PROCESS

The International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) is the official international body that regulates the frequency and quality of all EXPOs. The BIE manages the bid process to determine which country and city will have the honour of hosting an official registered or recognized EXPO.

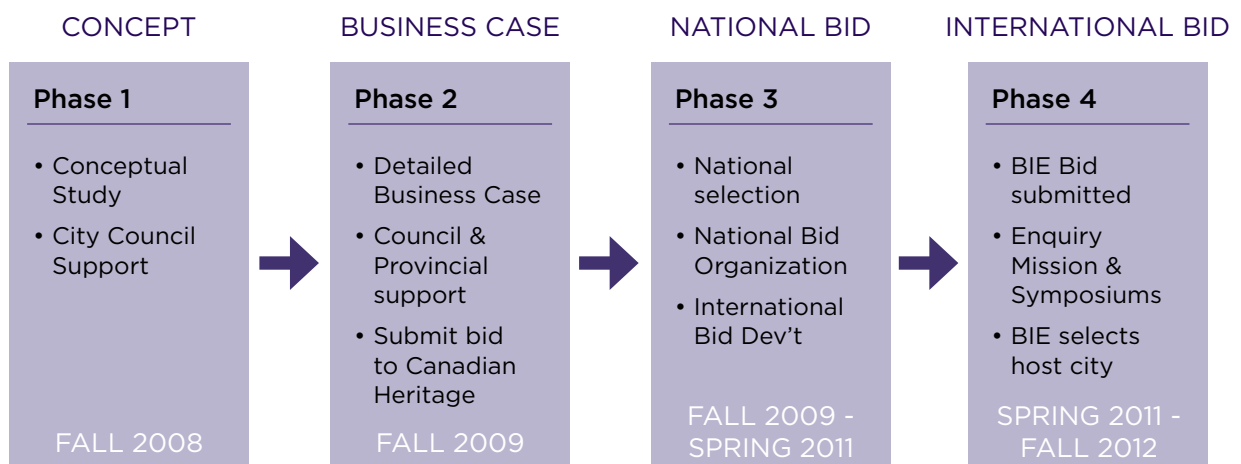
The bid process is lengthy. Countries wishing to host an EXPO conduct a national selection process to determine the candidate city for their country. The country then submits an initial bid application to the BIE. Receipt of the first national bid by the BIE, starts the clock – a 6-month deadline is then set for applications from other countries for that EXPO. At the close of applications, the BIE will organize a series of visits and “enquiry missions” to determine the feasibility of each bid.

As part of the process, each candidate location is expected to host 2 symposiums on the theme of its proposed EXPO. International experts and BIE delegates attend these symposiums, which provide each candidate the chance to promote their city, people, culture, facilities, and organizational ability.

The General Assembly of the BIE holds an official Candidate Vote to award the EXPO for a given year. Candidate countries make presentations to the 154 member countries represented in the General Assembly. Each country gets one vote, with official delegates casting their vote by secret electronic ballot.

Bidding for and hosting an EXPO requires enormous effort and shared commitment from governments, the private sector and, most importantly, the residents of a candidate city. It takes thousands of community leaders, volunteers, experts, and others to host a successful EXPO.

EDMONTON'S BID TIMELINE



AN EDMONTON EXPO

In 2007, the City of Edmonton began to explore the viability of a bid to host a recognized EXPO in 2017 or a registered EXPO in 2020. Given the ambitious nature of such an undertaking, the first phase of work has focused on a high-level review and study of whether Edmonton has sufficient hosting capability.

A Project Committee and a Citizen Committee were appointed to guide the initiative. The Project Committee, made up of elected city officials and staff, were responsible for making high-level decisions and providing guidance to the conceptual study. A project coordinator and the Office of the City Manager, with support from civic services and consultants completed the work.

The Citizen Committee was comprised of Edmonton community leaders. Their expertise, advice and feedback have helped inform key elements that need to be considered if Edmonton were to submit an EXPO bid. These include proposed themes for an EXPO, site considerations for where an EXPO could be held, proposed legacies, and tools for networking and community input. Contributors to the process are listed in the front of the report.

Phase 1 of the Committees' work has involved a high-level, conceptual study of the possibility of advancing an EXPO bid, and whether Edmonton could viably host an EXPO in 2017 or 2020. This report sets out the Committees' findings and recommendations.

If City Council approves, further work in Phase 2 will involve the development of a Detailed Business Case for an EXPO bid; securing the support of the Alberta government and the community; and submitting a bid to Canadian Heritage to be selected as Canada's candidate city for an official EXPO bid.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF HOSTING

Hosting an EXPO is a monumental undertaking that requires significant investments of time, money, and community commitment. There are impressive benefits that can be realized from this hard work. However, there are also inherent risks in hosting an event of the nature and scope of an EXPO.

Welcoming the world through an EXPO has significant benefits including:

Renewing the city – The legacy created by an EXPO can transform a city, by renewing urban areas and integrating new and innovative structures that improve a host city’s vibrancy and quality of life. Infrastructure built to host EXPO exhibits and house EXPO workers can find new life as urban housing, parks, museums, libraries, aquariums, and other public and private spaces. Transportation investments made to support an EXPO, such as public transit and road systems, also provide sustained value for the host city for decades.

Increasing tourism – Hosting an EXPO attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists. But an EXPO also results in direct and indirect attendance increases to other sites in the host city, province and country. Visitors to an EXPO will usually explore places of note in the area, and will even use the EXPO city as a launch point to see the host country. Since an EXPO is held over several months, other tourism-related locations and events during an EXPO period enjoy higher attendance rates. A successful EXPO can also create a lasting tourism legacy, turning happy visitors into repeat guests.

Supporting arts and culture – One of the key ingredients of an EXPO is a healthy dose of arts, culture and entertainment. EXPOs can include live music, street performers, symphony performances, art walks, theatre and more. As a festival city, Edmonton has a rich tradition of showcasing arts and culture, and many elements of Edmonton’s festivals lend themselves well to an EXPO. Visitors to EXPOs will also take the opportunity to enjoy arts and culture facilities and performances in the host city. The result is strong support for a host city’s arts and cultural community.

Building international recognition – EXPO welcomes visitors, diplomats and delegations from all over the world, raising the international profile of the host city, province and country. An EXPO puts a host city on the international map, enabling it to boost its identity and showcase itself to the world. Edmonton is a city whose confidence and ambitions are advancing with its continued growth. Hosting an EXPO would give Edmonton the opportunity to shine as Alberta’s capital city and generate international recognition of the opportunities our city has to offer.

Fostering new ideas – EXPO involves the building and sharing of world knowledge. Ideas and innovations are hallmarks of the EXPO experience. Hosting an EXPO exposes a host city to a vast array of possibilities, best practices and new frontiers of scientific, cultural and social understanding. A legacy of EXPO is often the permanent impact its exhibitions and symposiums have on a city’s thinking. This can lead to municipal and provincial creativity and leadership in areas such as energy, urban planning, environmental stewardship, or other important aspects of society.

Generating trade and commerce – EXPO offers the opportunity to promote investment, trade and business opportunities. The pavilions set up by countries are often designed as both exhibitions of knowledge and exhibitions of “nation-branding”, intended to promote new business linkages. Hosting an EXPO would serve as a catalyst for creating new economic opportunities for Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada as a whole.

Boosting community pride – Hosting an EXPO also creates the opportunity to contribute to international progress and development. An EXPO is about sharing discoveries, ideas, and innovations that address prominent issues facing the global community. Through an EXPO, a city, province and country can contribute to improved human knowledge and understanding in lasting, meaningful ways. It’s also about having fun – sharing and enjoying sights and sounds from around the world and providing hours of entertainment to citizens and visitors. An EXPO makes a host city come alive, spinning off additional events and adding excitement to cultural and entertainment venues. Hosting an EXPO touches off the assistance, energy and enthusiasm of thousands of volunteers, citizens and businesses. Communities unite proudly behind the opportunity to welcome the world

BENEFITS COME WITH RISKS

Although there are great benefits to hosting an EXPO, there are also some risks that need to be considered and managed:

Infrastructure requirements – The infrastructure required for an EXPO is considerable. A 25 hectares or more site must be developed or redeveloped, demanding the construction of buildings and facilities to host exhibits and events. Investments in transportation infrastructure are also required to move visitors and workers. Cost estimates and financial planning would need to address the experience and potential for infrastructure cost escalations.

Availability of resources and expertise – Numerous resources, especially labour, are required to successfully organize, build and host an EXPO. Alberta is expected to continue to face chronic labour shortages in the foreseeable future. Finding ways to secure and optimize resources and expertise would be necessary, as there is a risk that a dearth of human resources could undermine an EXPO’s success.

Financial costs – An EXPO comes with significant cost. Although costs can be offset by financial sponsors and gate admission revenues, the upfront expense of an EXPO requires shared commitment from the municipal, provincial and federal governments. Many EXPOs have faced escalating costs and a negative bottom line.

Community and government support – The scope of an EXPO demands strong support from all levels of government and members of the local community. Failure to secure either can scuttle a bid and compromise success. A proposed bid by Toronto for the 2015 EXPO was abandoned when a funding agreement amongst government partners could not be secured.

International reputation – EXPO involves welcoming tourists from around the world. A top-notch international reputation is essential for a successful EXPO.

Time – Relatively speaking, the time between the start of the bid process and the opening date of a proposed EXPO is short. An EXPO implementation plan must be efficient and effective. Managing the risk associated with construction and other delays must to be considered in site and facility planning.

Post-EXPO plans – There are risks in regards to post-EXPO sites and facilities. Although most EXPO sites are given new life, there are instances where cities have failed to take advantage of EXPO legacies. In the worst cases, sites have been completely abandoned, fallen into disrepair, and torn down. Solid planning for post-EXPO use is essential.

Experience – Although Edmonton has hosted many international events, it has never bid on an event of this magnitude. Lessons in planning, promoting and securing events of this scope could be learned from Calgary, Vancouver and Montreal.

As work proceeds on an Edmonton EXPO bid, both the benefits and relative risks of hosting an EXPO will be continually assessed.