

## **Dubai Association Conference 2019 Strengthening Association Impact on Society**

How can the association community grow in a way that creates a positive impact on society? This is the key question the five-year-old Dubai Association Centre (DAC) aims to address in the second edition of the Dubai Association Conference, being held 9-10 December at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, the two-day conference will gather top association executives from around the world, as well as industry leaders, government representatives, and university faculties and students, to discuss how working together can “*create an ecosystem for associations to prosper*,” explains Issam Kazim, CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing.

*“As Dubai continues to grow as a knowledge hub, associations have immense potential for driving growth in our rapidly transforming economy,”* Kazim continues. *“Along with being a catalyst for business opportunities within a thriving ecosystem, they have the power to fuel innovation and creativity, which ultimately contributes to the wellbeing of our communities and society.”*

### **Creating true value**

During the inaugural Dubai Association Conference held in December 2017, one of the major concerns expressed by associations and speakers was how their work and main activities are impacting global society and creating true value. This year’s theme, “The Societal Impact of Associations,” addresses this topic head-on and will offer deep dives into how associations can and should develop core strategies around sustainability and social impact in order to become key drivers of positive change. The conference will also touch on the value proposition of associations going beyond direct and indirect economic benefits—and how a community like the one growing in Dubai can help.

*“Dubai has strengthened its reputation as a regional association hub in recent years, and global associations are fast realizing the attractive advantages and expansion opportunities that the emirate can offer them,”* says Hassan Al Hashemi, vice president of international relations at Dubai Chamber. *“At the same time, Dubai is benefitting from the city’s fast-growing association community, as these organisations make a positive contribution to the economy and society by bringing with them best international practices, valuable expertise, and international events that support the emirate’s knowledge economy and enhance its long-term competitiveness.”*

To aid associations in developing a cohesive and systematic approach to creating large-scale impact, this year’s Dubai Association Conference will break down its programme into four pillars: Impact and Legacy — Key Concepts; Designing an Impact Management and Measurement Programme; Organizational Resilience and Foresighting; and The Art of Collaboration. Each session will explore at least one of these four areas of impact: Community Well-being, Business and Opportunities, Knowledge and Research, or Creativity and Innovation.

The host destination, Dubai, will act as a living case study for the subjects addressed during the conference, discussing how the association scene in the city has evolved since the inaugural 2017 conference, as well as the legacies the event left behind.

*“Dubai has been at the forefront of positioning associations within various sectors to ultimately achieve their highest potential,”* says Mahir Julfar, senior vice president of venue services management at Dubai World Trade Centre. *“Since its inception, the Dubai Association Conference has successfully bridged the gap between like-minded international and regional experts that share a combined passion for transformation, creativity and innovation.”*

The Dubai Association Centre was formed in 2014 as a joint initiative of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) as a *“response to the surge in the demand for association engagement in the UAE and the Middle East.”* Now, more than 60 associations fall under DAC’s umbrella, which acts as a platform for dialogue and education for associations interested in expanding their presence and activities in the Middle East.

*“We’re honoured to have witnessed the evolution of education across industries through intercultural knowledge exchange, which in turn will make an impact on the city’s economy,”* Julfar says. *“We look forward to another edition of the Dubai Association Conference—one that will help businesses flourish, innovate and encourage key dialogue for those looking to explore business opportunities in the Middle East.”*

### **Key Concepts of Impact & Legacy**

With issues like the growing pressure to attract and maintain members, associations are questioning how to improve their value proposition to stakeholders. In the first pillar — Impact and Legacy – Key Concepts — a TED-style session will explore how associations can set themselves apart from competitive offers and understand and measure the positive social impacts their activities are leaving behind. Attendees will also analyse goals to create a 2030 strategy similar to the blueprint drafted by the UN in 2015, which pinpoints 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Experts will take this concept and adapt it to the association sector, showing how goals can be integrated into long-term strategy to create impactful business models that make the shift from being activity-driven to being motivated by the positive outcomes created for stakeholders. Attendees will hear first-hand how associations and stakeholders in Dubai are weaving some of these Sustainable Development Goals into their own strategy, in addition to how putting impact at the forefront of a business model can create new opportunities in terms of value sharing and growth.

While we only touched on the first pillar here, we will dive deeper into the conference’s three other pillars in upcoming issues of *Boardroom*, sharing more about the strategies and sessions that will help associations create more social value for both their members and their communities.

For further information regarding registration, please contact Mr. Junjie Si via [Junjiesi@Dubaiassociationcentre.com](mailto:Junjiesi@Dubaiassociationcentre.com) or visit [www.dubaiassociationconference.com](http://www.dubaiassociationconference.com)