

## Kyoto Convention and Visitor Bureau's (KCVB) Kyoto Culture for Meetings Subsidy

Kyoto's original initiative to proactively engage the meetings industry with local traditional culture and traditional industry

### Background on Kyoto's History of Sustainability

The word "Sustainability" is still a new concept in Japan, but the spirit of sustainability is woven very deep in to the culture and history of Kyoto. For a long time in Japanese history, the capital was always considered temporary and was frequently moved. Kyoto was founded as the first permanent capital, with sustainability specifically and deliberately built into the design of the city.

One example of this is our green tea agriculture, which was introduced at the founding of our city for the very purpose of developing social and economic stability in the capital. With rice and other annual crops it is easy to cash out at the end of a season and move elsewhere. But tea is a perennial crop - a long term investment that helped to create a stable and sustainable agricultural industry and reinforced Japan's commitment in its new permanent capital.

It was successful - as the capital and home of the emperor for over 1,000 years, Kyoto flourished culturally and has left us with abundant living cultural assets - artisans, farmers, brewers, artists, performers, etc. protecting traditions that were handed down to them.

Of course living in harmony with our environment is very important to us. Modern day government policies like mandatory garbage separation, incentives for small businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and building height restrictions help protect our environment. We are proud to be the birthplace of the Kyoto Protocol (COP3) and to be the first Asian destination to join the GDS-Index.

But for all of us here in Kyoto, ensuring the future of our traditional industries is another fundamental part of our definition of sustainability. And in many ways, we are being successful. For example, Kyoto still produces the world's finest Japanese green tea.



Visitors enjoying a taste of Kyoto's famous 'matcha' tea during a tea ceremony.

### The Kyoto Culture for Meetings Subsidy

At the Kyoto Convention and Visitors Bureau (KCVB) we have a truly unique sustainability initiative that is specifically designed to protect Kyoto's culture and traditional industries, our Kyoto Culture for Meetings Subsidy.



KCVB's engagement with our local cultural entities has brought about a rich diversity in our supporting members.

Simply put, this city government funded subsidy pays up to 300,000 JPY (Approx. 2,800 USD) of the costs of incorporating Kyoto's traditional culture in qualifying conventions, meetings, incentive travel, etc.

Usage examples include, tea ceremonies, handmade gifts for delegates from local artisans, kimono wearing, Zen meditation classes, workshop visits and/or hands-on classes with craftspeople, traditional performances like Taiko drums and music and dancing by Maiko and Geiko (Kyoto-style geisha), etc.

We have fostered close relationships with our traditional industry partners that allows us to offer comprehensive counselling to introduce meetings to their perfect local cultural partners. Because they understand the potential of the meetings industry to support their industries many of these partners have chosen to become supporting members of the bureau. (Even the Maiko and Geiko are supporting members of the bureau!)

This initiative was originally launched in the 2011 fiscal year and has been wildly popular, with subsidy funds selling out for the last two years. Exact numbers and breakdown of subsidy use is not released publicly. However we can share a case study to demonstrate the impact.

The 59th Annual Meeting of the Japan Diabetes Society (JDS 2016) was held in Kyoto from May 19 - 21, 2016 with approx. 14,000 participants, including medical professionals and local residents.

In collaboration with our partner, the Kyoto Museum of Traditional Crafts, 13,800 special conference bags were custom made using



The JDS 2016 convention bags were a great example of how a small amount of subsidy funds can create a big economic impact for local businesses.

beautiful locally produced traditional 'Chirimen' fabric (Japanese Silk Crepe) and tags with the JDS 2016 logo.

The bags total value was approx. JPY 12.6 Million/USD 115,000 and were made possible, in part, by our Kyoto Culture for Meetings Subsidy. This was the largest number of traditional gifts ever to be purchased for a meeting in Kyoto.

These kinds of special touches offer a way for meetings like JDS 2016 to feel special and unique and to give delegates a chance to connect with Kyoto's culture in a way that they can physically and tangibly bring home with them.

### **Kyoto Culture Wins us More Bids and is Often Better for the Environment**

When meetings utilize traditional industries, it can also have a positive impact on the environment.

In the case of the bags, everyone loved them so there were no leftover or discarded bags to dispose of.

Furthermore, it is often the traditions and industries that have already been existing sustainably for hundreds of years that know best how to exist in harmony with the environment.

For example, Japanese sake brewers are known for being some of the fiercest protectors of the mountains – for they know that healthy mountains are the source of the precious, clean, and delicious water they need to make their sake. When a meeting in Kyoto makes a toast with local sake instead of imported beer or wine, they help these businesses stay strong so they can keep watching over and protecting Kyoto's nature.

However, in recent years consumption of Sake has been dwindling due to Japan's shrinking population and popularity of other beverages. Two years ago, in response to this and to raise awareness, subsidy requirements were changed to allow sake barrel opening ceremonies to be eligible - *if* the events use locally brewed sake. Since then, we have received many applications for meetings wanting to hold sake barrel opening ceremonies in their events.

Finally, this initiative makes us more attractive as a destination. It is one of the aces up our sleeve that helps us beat out other destinations in winning bids. Of course we don't want to lose our competitive edge, but we would encourage other destinations to develop similar initiatives. All of us in the meetings and events industry influence a huge amount of economic power. We hope that we all can work together as friendly competitors and make sure our industry is contributing to the sustainability and protection of the world's great cultural assets and traditional industries.

#### **For more information on Sustainability in Kyoto:**

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