



Bidding or Dialogue:

which approach to major event
allocation do host cities prefer?

A BCW SPORTS SURVEY

NOVEMBER 2022

A Much Needed View From the Main Stakeholder

In recent years, the way in which events have been awarded to cities and countries has changed considerably.

Traditionally, major international sports events were allocated through a bidding process launched by a rights holder. Now, a so-called dialogue process is being introduced by many rights holders.

International sports organisations and other rights holders have their reasons for choosing one process over the other, but which process is preferred by host cities themselves? Interestingly, until now, the main stakeholder – the cities bidding for such events themselves – have never been asked this question. This is why we, at BCW Sports, wanted to hear their point of view.

So, we launched this survey so cities could have their voices heard. Ultimately, we hope that the results and following debate can lead to the creation of the optimal event allocation process that will benefit both sides – the rights holders and the host cities.

We are pleased to share the results of this research with you.

Switzerland, November 2022



Lars Haue-Pedersen
Managing Director
BCW Sports

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online using web-based software QuestionPro. It was sent to leaders responsible for event attraction from among 100 cities from around the world that are known to be active in bidding for and hosting major international sports events. The survey was carried out over the last quarter of 2022. It consisted of eight multiple-choice questions that allowed for additional comments to be inserted by the participants.

Summary of Findings

Moving from a more traditional bidding process to a more flexible dialogue process, several international sports organisations have drastically changed the way they allocate their major events to host cities.

What is the difference between the two processes?

- **Bidding process:** This process is launched by a rights holder and includes a detailed set of requirements, a strict timeline, and a clear decision-making process. Cities state their interest, submit official bid documents, host a site visit, and often execute a communications campaign. A final presentation follows from all the candidates during an official event and then the decision-makers vote, either openly or secretly, and a final decision is made.
- **Dialogue process:** This is where rights holders initiate an ongoing consultation with cities that are interested in hosting the event. After several discussions (dialogue), planning meetings, site visits and negotiations with one or more candidates, the rights holder appoints a host city for the event and makes an official announcement. Often the list of cities that are in dialogue with the rights holder is not made public and there is no set deadline as to when the announcement for a future edition of the event will be made.

The results of this survey can be summarised by three key findings about the cities' point of view on the preferred way rights holders allocate major international sports events.

1 The process is important and significantly influences the interest of cities in trying to secure the rights to host an event

The results from the survey show that the process used for the allocation of events has a significant influence on the interest of cities trying to secure the event. Almost 80% of respondents said that the process had a high or medium influence on their decision to pursue an event – additionally noting that the key factors in their decision making are transparency and trust in the process being used and the timeline of the process.

Past experience is also important, with close to 50% of cities stating that a less positive experience in a process (stemming from the rules in place or lack of clarity in the decision-making process, among other factors) led to a decision not to bid for future editions of the same event.

2 The dialogue process is preferred overall by most cities, but it has important weaknesses that need improvements

The dialogue process was shown to be the overall preferred process, with a clear majority of cities (56%) stating they prefer it over a traditional bidding process. The main arguments in support of the dialogue process were the opportunity to influence the rights holders' requirements and tailor the event to the city's needs, as well as the opportunity to learn and develop through deeper engagement with the rights holder.

Participants highlighted that the downsides of the dialogue process were a lack of clarity in the process in terms of timing and decision-making as compared to the traditional bidding process, as well as the level of information available from rights holders about this new process. For example, 57% of cities stated that they had missed a chance to be involved in a dialogue process for an event that they were interested in because they were simply not aware that the process was ongoing and that the rights holder was open to discussing the event with potential cities.

3 Clarity, consistency and transparency in the process are what potential host cities want

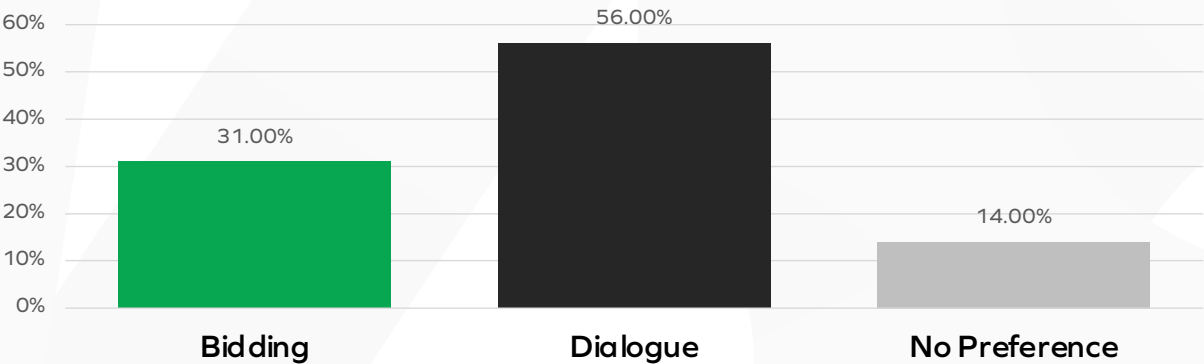
The results showed that potential host cities are mainly looking for clarity, consistency and transparency from the rights holder no matter which process is being used.

For clarity, host cities would like to be aware of the timing for the beginning and end of a process and be given sufficient time so they can consider whether they would like to get involved. In terms of consistency, cities highlighted that once a process starts it should not change (e.g., the timeline suddenly changing or an additional edition of the event becomes open at the same time). And finally, they ask for transparency in terms of the decision-making – specifically the criteria being used to make the decision and the people who will make the final decision – and most importantly transparency if a decision has already been taken (yet the process has been opened anyway).

Survey Results

The results from each of the eight questions asked are shown in the following, including a selection of comments made by participants for each question.

Which system of allocation for a major sports event host city would your city prefer rights holders use?

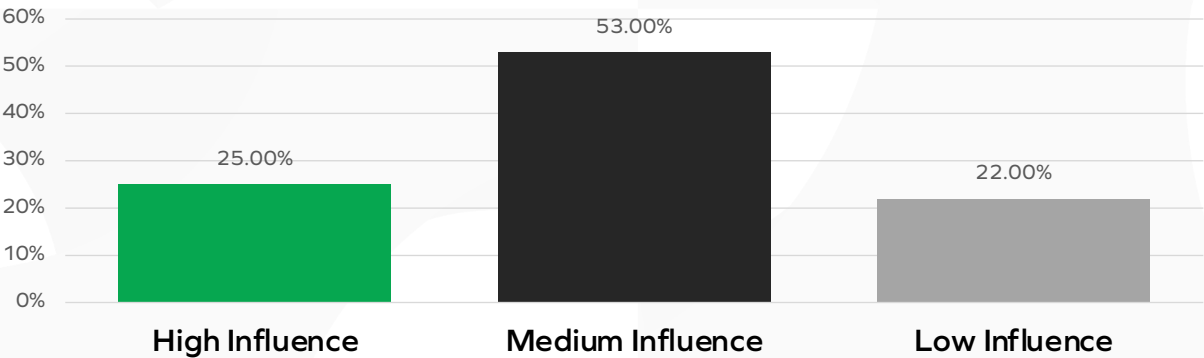


"It all comes down to the working relationship and the ability of both sides to meet common goals."

"The essential thing is to have clear rules known by all."

"A transparent, constant dialogue is always preferable. But this can be placed in a traditional bidding context as well."

Does the system in place for allocating the event (bidding or dialogue) have an influence on whether your city expresses interest in trying to secure the right to host an event?

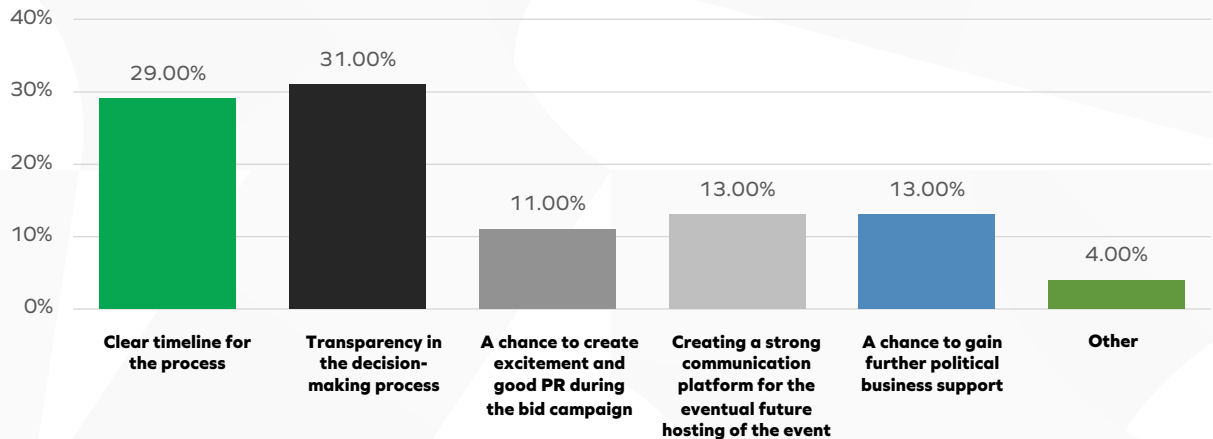


"We would have a much greater appetite to express interest in an event in the absence of a bidding process."

"We will not enter into a process which is not clearly defined and where we don't fully know the decision criteria and who will make the decision."

"Only really important point is timing (duration), You can have a great dialogue, if the process is too short, it is useless."

What would you say are the main benefits of the traditional bidding system (select the two most important)?

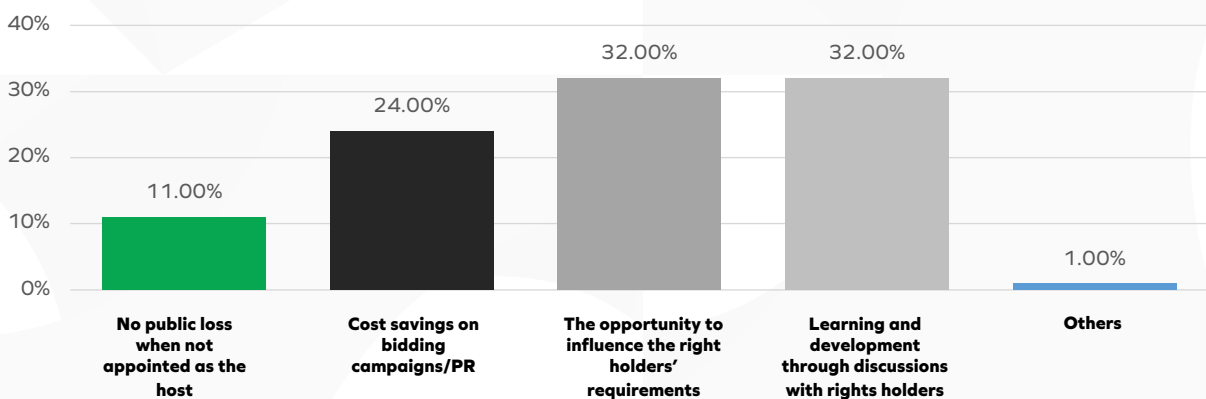


"Traditional bidding process has the benefit of 'keeping everyone honest' but history is littered with many examples where this has not been the case."

"Clarity in the process is good, however it only works when the rights holder sticks to their agreed bidding process and don't change the rules far into the process."

"Bidding is only a problem if you lose!"

What would you say are the main benefits of the dialogue system (select the two most important)?

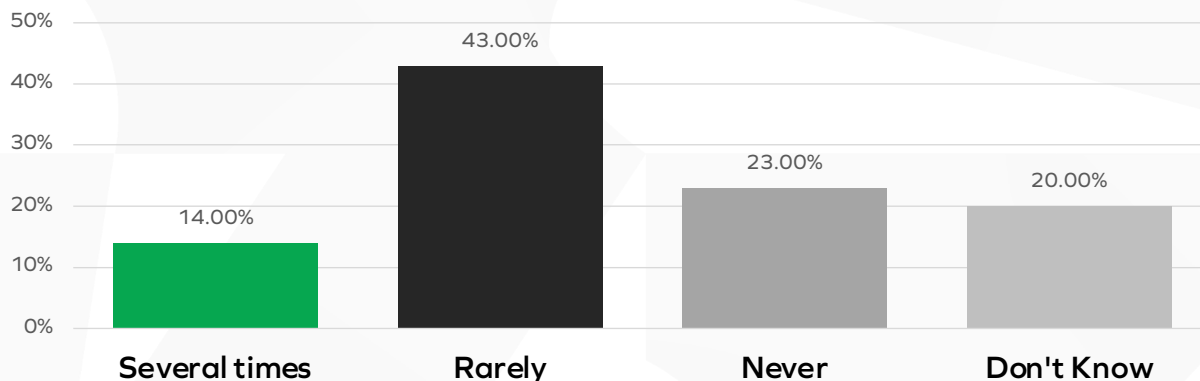


"We believe the opportunity to influence works both ways - for the rights holder as well as the destination's requirements."

"We need a process with a formal bid submission accompanied with open dialogue with short listed cities from the beginning"

"To influence and shape the outcome, to propose innovative approaches to hosting and delivery that may not have been considered by the right holders but hold appeal."

In recent years has your city missed the chance to secure the rights for hosting an event because you were not aware of the process for allocating the event?

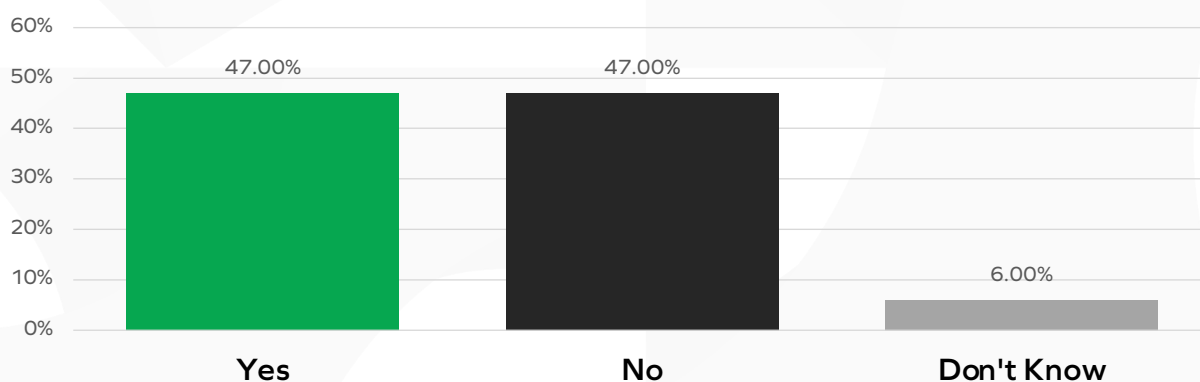


"We have sometimes experienced that an interesting event was awarded and we hadn't heard that this was open for bids."

"This occurred for an event with a dialogue process, as in that process we didn't know when decisions were to be made (when another city is further in the process than you are)."

"Losing to political motivated backroom deals is a common, uncontrollable part of bidding."

Has your city ever decided not to bid for future editions of a sport event because of a less positive experience from a previous unsuccessful bid?

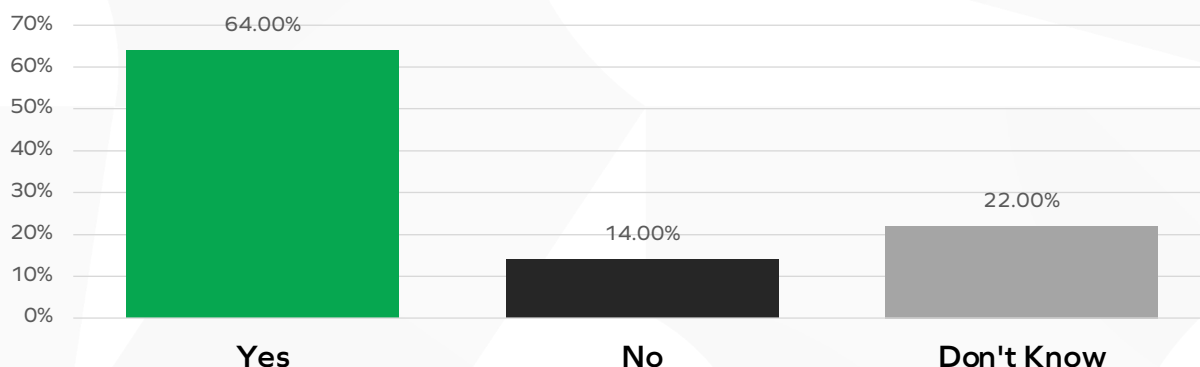


"If expectations are not managed carefully, when a bid is lost this can have an impact on potential support for future bids (whether for the same event or sometimes for different events)."

"We have learned quite a lot from unsuccessful bids and came back stronger."

"This is no different than sport itself. You win some and lose some, but for sure you lose all that you don't bid for!"

Has your city experienced that a win in a competitive bidding process made it easier to generate excitement among public and media for the subsequent hosting of the event?

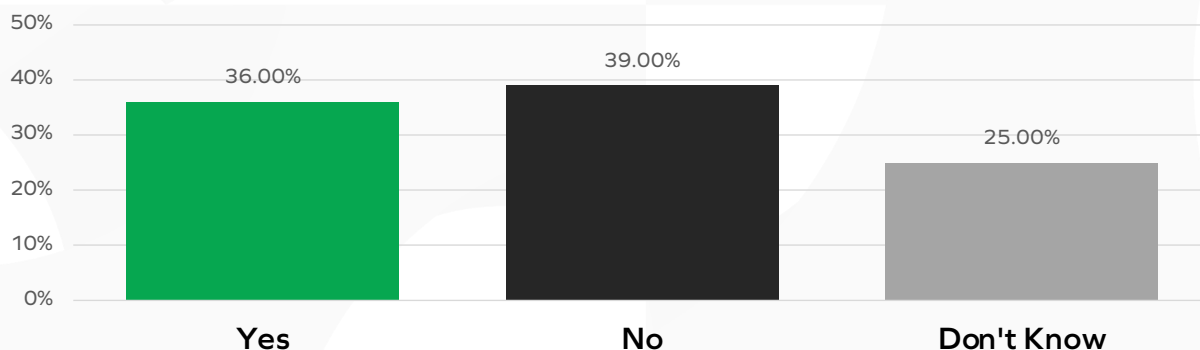


"Yes, it gives a strong start for talking to sponsors."

"From the allocation of the event to the actual execution of the event is often several years, so probably it is not so important how the event was won."

"Excitement is generated by the act of winning a competitive bid because it is a sign that other cities also value the event."

Has your city ever had to deal with reputational issues due to the participation in a competitive bidding process where not all candidates were seen to have been following official bidding rules?



"Reputation issues put everyone in a difficult position and creates a risk of funders, media and general public losing faith and trust in the process and ultimately in the specific sport or event."

"Bias and political influence are common in event bidding and need to be eliminated."

"Make the rules as clear as possible and tell us upfront if there are already intentions to select a particular host city."

About BCW

BCW is the global communications agency built to move people. BCW partners with clients in the B2B, consumer, corporate, crisis management, healthcare, public affairs, purpose and technology sectors to set strategic direction for all communications and create powerful and unexpected ideas that earn attention. Through an “earned-plus” offer – earned media plus paid media, creative technology, data, AI and an expanding suite of innovative capabilities – BCW moves people with power and precision to move its clients forward. BCW is a part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company. For more information, visit www.bcw-global.com.

BCW Sports is the specialized sports practice of BCW, based in Lausanne, Switzerland. Based on extensive experience, BCW Sports developed and offers BCW Eventus™, a tool designed for attracting, activating and assessing sporting events – and therefore supporting cities in moving up to the next level. [Read more here.](#)

For More Information

For more information about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Stefany Chatelain-Cardenas
Senior Account Executive
BCW Switzerland

stefany.cardenas@bcw-global.com
+41 21 313 23 00

BCW Switzerland
Rue du Petit-Chêne 38
CH-1003 Lausanne