

## Explore Edmonton Case Study

### Opportunity

[Explore Edmonton](#) is the destination management and marketing organization for Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and manages the Edmonton Convention Centre and the Edmonton EXPO Centre. The organization markets Edmonton as a destination for visitors, major events, meetings, and conventions to generate economic impact and social benefit for the city.

When the COVID-19 pandemic halted travel for much of the world, Edmonton faced significant challenges, as being a premiere travel destination was at the forefront of its entity. The crisis demanded an immediate response to protect the community from an infectious disease outbreak that was quickly growing.

Fortunately, Edmonton's main event facilities, Edmonton EXPO Centre and Edmonton Convention Centre, remained operational throughout the pandemic. Even at the height of the crisis, they made regular use of their facilities by utilizing them as emergency response locations. The Edmonton EXPO Centre served as the city's largest vaccination and testing center; the Edmonton Convention Centre provided emergency shelter and other accommodations for the city's most vulnerable.

"This meant that we had to introduce new processes and safe work practices quickly, and in a relatively high-risk setting. Having direction through the GBAC Star Facility Accreditation was instrumental in helping us to do this at the speed and precision that was required," said Arlindo Gomes, Vice President, Business Development & Venue Management.

### Solution



Establishing these facilities as essential places during the pandemic meant they each needed to implement new processes that allowed them to work safely in a high-risk environment. While Explore Edmonton still wanted to be able to host in-person events safely in the future, it knew that turning to GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation would provide the tools needed to ensure that the occupants who choose to host their events at Edmonton's venues were in a safe and sanitary setting.

"Because of the novel nature of COVID-19, it was important for us to adopt a framework for infectious disease prevention that came with support from a credible source, like the ISSA. This gave us assurances that we were developing an infectious disease program



that was to the highest standard of industry best practices," said Gomes.

The health and safety of every visitor is the top priority of Explore Edmonton. Its mission aims to ensure guests feel comfortable and welcomed, even amid a pandemic. Some protocols and procedures that changed after achieving GBAC STAR Accreditation include:

- Adoption of new technologies, cleaning equipment, disinfectant chemicals and personal protective equipment.
- Processes for early detection and emergency response—primarily in meeting and event facilities but also in hotel accommodations.

- Partnering with transportation companies that have become GBAC STAR Accredited.

However, like many companies during the pandemic, Edmonton continued to face challenges like event cancellations as new variants emerged and positive cases surged. Achieving GBAC STAR Accreditation provided support by offering swift responses to frequent changes in risk levels present in the facility and across the destination. Staying up to date on the most recent cleaning techniques, regulations, and protocols became crucial to keep businesses across Edmonton running.

## Results



Through GBAC STAR Destination Accreditation, Edmonton achieved the following benefits:

- An increase of employees informed of and knowledgeable about infectious disease prevention practices, allowing Edmonton to confidently provide answers to client questions about safety protocols in the building, leaving them with peace of mind.
- A collaboration opportunity with Edmonton's industry partners launched a "Visit Safely in Edmonton" campaign, which included a landing page, video, and ads. In just three short months the "Visit Safely in Edmonton" campaign garnered over 3 million impressions, more than 5,000 landing page sessions, and was included in more than 20 national and international industry magazines and publications, effectively stimulating event and leisure travel bookings by bolstering confidence that Edmonton is a destination that takes health and safety seriously.
- The extension of the Health and Safety program to include infectious disease prevention through GBAC STAR Accreditation is one way Edmonton can continue to prioritize its people and guests. Infectious disease risk assessment and response has been intentionally and deeply engrained in Explore Edmonton's business systems - it has become a crucial part of the conversation for almost all decision-making.

"Caring for One Another is one of our organizational values at Explore Edmonton," said Gomes, "it is deeply engrained into our company purpose and what makes our employees proud to work here."

**Visit our website at [GBAC.org](https://www.gbac.org)**

Contact us by phone at 1-800-225-4772 (North America)  
or 1-847-982-0800 (outside North America)



*We had to think about longer-term plans we should put in place, not just to respond to infectious diseases, but also to prevent them from spreading.*

—Arlindo Gomes  
Vice President  
Business Development & Venue  
Management.



## About GBAC, a Division of ISSA

Composed of international leaders in the field of microbial-pathogenic threat analysis, mitigation, response, and recovery, the Global Biorisk Advisory Council<sup>™</sup> (GBAC), a Division of ISSA, provides training, guidance, accreditation, certification, crisis management assistance and leadership to government, commercial, and private entities looking to mitigate, quickly address, and/or recover from biological threats and real-time crises. The organization's services include biorisk management program assessment and training, infectious disease and biological material response and remediation, the GBAC STAR<sup>™</sup> Facility and Service Accreditation Programs, training and certification of individuals, and consulting for building owners and facility managers.