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## THE INAUGURAL CONNECT CALIFORNIA IS IN THE BOOKS

ATLANTA, May 12, 2016—The first Connect California took place April 27-29 in Irvine, California. The reverse-style trade show for association, sports and corporate planners hosted 150 industry professionals for one-on-one appointments.

Feedback from the show has been extremely positive. "This was my first time attending a Connect event, and the experience met and exceeded my expectations. I found it to be a well-rounded event—marketplace, networking and sessions—with valuable content. The opportunity to meet one-on-one with suppliers was, for me, much more effective than the standard trade show environment and a much better use of my time. I look forward to future Connect events," said Tracy Newell, president of MeetingWise LLC.

The event featured an opening reception in Hotel Irvine's new outdoor space, The Backyard, with a live DJ while attendees mixed and mingled. Day two opened with a keynote breakfast featuring branding expert Karen McCullough, followed by an interactive CSR project. Connect California teamed up with Stop Hunger Now and attendees packaged 10,152 meals in under an hour for children in Vietnam. The afternoon's lunch keynote, author and businessman Da Chen, brought a standing ovation as he expressed his story of triumph and perseverance through art.

Day three began with keynote Michael Dominguez, chief sales officer for MGM Resorts International, who provided insight on sales strategies in the MICE and leisure segments, including industry relations and diversity sales. After three days of prescheduled appointments between planners and suppliers, attendees did not leave empty-handed. "Connect California provides appointment access to the best meeting planners who are ideal for our destination. The clients came equipped with RFPs for sourcing, and I received eight in total! Fantastic event," said John Ehlenfeldt, executive vice president of Visit Huntington Beach.

Dates and locations for Connect California 2017 will be announced soon. For more information on Connect California, please visit [connectcaliforniameetings.com](http://connectcaliforniameetings.com). Connect's next regional event will be Connect New England, June 22-24 in Hartford, Connecticut. Learn more at [connectnewenglandmeetings.com](http://connectnewenglandmeetings.com).

### ABOUT CONNECT

Connect is a leader in the meetings, travel and tourism industry. Specializing in destination marketing, the company produces digital programs, online and mobile solutions, meetings business and travel magazines, trade shows and consumer events, travel guides for newspapers and leisure magazines, and destination information, which is distributed through broadcast and custom programs. More information about the company's brands and services is available at [connectmeetings.com](http://connectmeetings.com).

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