ALGA COVID-19 Guidance

This document is adapted from guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to following these requirements, ALGA events should comply with any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations.

Definition: The term “participants” used throughout this document refers to any person present at an ALGA hosted event, such as training attendees, support staff, speakers. Regarding peer reviews, “participants” is defined as peer review team members, unless specifically stated otherwise in the guidance.

Transitional Guidance: This document is intended to be transitional guidance and not permanent guidance as COVID-19 impacts evolve.

I. General Requirements for All ALGA Event Participants
   a) All participants will receive a daily temperature screening event before being allowed to participate or complete an attestation of symptoms or exposure. Individuals with temperatures of 100.4 or above will not be allowed to attend in person. Refunds will be available for COVID-19-related training cancellations or attendees can request registration be moved to the virtual streaming option, if available.
   b) We encourage attendees to practice all health and social distancing guidelines as recommended by the CDC, as well as state, local, territorial, and tribal government requirements, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
   c) In case of conflicts between federal, state, and local requirements, ALGA events should follow the applicable guidance of the most local form of government specific to the event location.
   d) All unvaccinated participants should stay home and isolate or quarantine, if they have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days, are waiting on COVID-19 test results, have COVID-19 symptoms, or have had close contact with a person who has tested positive for or who has symptoms of COVID-19. Participants should use CDC criteria to determine when it is okay to end isolation or quarantine.
   e) Participants who are fully vaccinated may follow federal, state, or local guidelines that are less stringent than the guidelines offered in I(d).¹ ALGA will not require proof of vaccination, but participants should be aware that

¹ People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 ≥2 weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or ≥2 weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson [J&J]/Janssen); there is currently no post-vaccination time limit on fully vaccinated status. (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html)
other relevant parties (e.g., a local government receiving a peer review) may institute such a requirement.

f) During the registration and team selection process, registrants and peer reviewers will be asked to acknowledge that they understand and agree with the “General Requirements for All ALGA Event Participants” listed above.

II. Regulatory Awareness
a) ALGA Regional Training hosts, liaisons and peer review hosting shops should be aware of applicable regulatory policies to ensure the event can be held in their community, the associated facilities conform to all COVID-19 related requirements, and the participants are informed of the requirements.

III. Hosts and COVID-19 Points of Contact
a) In addition to hosts, all ALGA events will identify and assign a backup host in case the host is sick and unable to participate in the training or peer review. This backup host should be cross-trained and made aware of all host duties.

b) Either the host or a designee will be identified as the onsite staff person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All participants should be informed who this person is and how to contact them during and after the event. A backup COVID-19 point of contact should also be designated for the event.

IV. Prior to the Event
a) Participants should be encouraged to check for any travel restrictions before traveling to an ALGA Regional Training or peer review.

b) ALGA hosts, liaisons, and peer review hosting shops will provide applicable state and local guidelines to participants 30 days from the event and will notify participants of any important changes leading up to the event, if applicable.

c) Online attendance options may be available for ALGA Regional Trainings, for those who are unable to or who do not feel safe attending in person.

d) Participants will be required to provide their contact information, in case of future contact tracing needs.

V. Refunds
a. Refunds will be available for COVID-19-related training cancellations.

b. Peer review team members who have to cancel travel to a peer review site due to isolation or quarantine are eligible to receive a travel reimbursement from ALGA if they cannot receive credit or reimbursement on their own. Travel reimbursement must be made within the
reimbursement timeframe for peer review teams provided in the ALGA travel policy.

VI. Venues/Layouts
a) The size of the venue, seating arrangement, and number of participants should allow for any recommended social distancing requirements. This includes rooms in which peer review activities, such as file reviews, interviews, and update meetings, are occurring.
b) A training venue will be arranged so that the Speakers are at least 6 feet away from participants.
c) Crowded waiting areas or lines, such as registration lines, should be eliminated if possible. If lines are necessary, people should be encouraged to stay within any recommended social distancing requirements through signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
d) Each participant should be provided a name sign to place at their table so that each participant uses the same seat throughout the training. (On the second day of training, participants may choose a different seat after the tables and chairs have been disinfected.) Name sign use may also facilitate contact tracing, if needed, after the training.
e) Regional training hosts and/or liaisons will consult with venue operators about their COVID-19 policies prior to scheduling the venue and at least two weeks before the training is scheduled.
f) When selecting venues, hosts and/or liaisons should consider things such as:
   1. the safety protocols at the venue
   2. whether paid venues have a flexible cancellation policy
   3. whether other events will be occurring in the venue at the same time

g) ALGA’s COVID-19 safety protocols will also be provided to the venue so they are aware of the protocols being followed during the event.

VII. Speakers
a) Prior to attending the event, speakers will be asked to acknowledge that they understand and agree with the “General Requirements for All ALGA Event Participants” listed above.
b) Local travel restrictions should be considered before speakers are asked to travel to a training.
c) Backup sessions should be planned, such as a remote presentation, roundtable topics or alternate speakers, in case speakers are unexpectedly unable to attend the training due to COVID-19.

VIII. Health Checks and Hygiene
a) CDC recommends conducting health checks such as temperature screening and other symptom checking of participants in a way that is safe and respectful, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
b) Participants should be discouraged from greeting others with physical contact (for example, handshakes).
c) Frequently touched surfaces such as podiums, microphones, laptops, presentation clickers, pens, counters, or hard surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected between use. Participants should be encouraged to use their own pens, or individual pens should be provided.
d) Adequate supplies will be available at all events to support healthy hygiene. Supplies include soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, a way to dry hands (e.g., paper towels, hand dryer), tissues, disinfectant wipes, and masks in case participants do not have them but choose to use them. Budget for these supplies should be considered when planning the event.
e) Signs should be posted in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures and COVID-19 guidelines.
f) Reminders on protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19 should be provided during morning announcements and throughout the training.

IX. Food
a) Self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations should be avoided. Pre-packaged boxes or bags and individual drinks for each attendee will be recommended.
b) Only disposable food service items including utensils and dishes will be used.
c) The event should provide bottled water and/or encourage participants to bring their own, to discourage the use of communal water systems.

X. Compliance & Enforcement
a) To reduce the risk of non-compliance, participants will be asked to acknowledge that they understand and agree with the “General Requirements for All ALGA Event Participants” listed above.
b) Reminders will be sent to participants regarding COVID-19 requirements and protocols.

XI. Post Event
a) Participants should be asked to inform ALGA Member Services, if they test positive for COVID-19 or if they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath after attending an ALGA event.
b) ALGA Member Services should attempt to contact participants via e-mail.
c) ALGA Member Services will contact the local health department if notified of a confirmed COVID-19 participant.

XII. Lessons Learned
a) ALGA liaisons may meet with hosts after the event to discuss and note any lessons learned. COVID-19 requirements and guidance will be updated as needed to improve future trainings and peer reviews.

XIII. Other Guidance
a) Additional guidance can be found on the CDC’s website.

b) Hosts and liaisons may also use the CDC’s Events and Gatherings Readiness and Planning Tool to help with planning trainings during the pandemic.