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**GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OUR HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**



# South Carolina Safe Meetings Guide

Information contained within this document applies specifically to hosting meetings and events safely in the context of contagious disease. The guidelines do not include all steps and considerations in meeting and event planning. They are specific to mitigating exposure to contagious disease while hosting face-to-face meetings and events. Each organization and event are different, so these suggestions should be modified to fit individual circumstances.

The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice - nor does it represent the official perspective of any of the volunteers' employers; instead, all information, content, and materials available are for general informational purposes only.

Weigh all options to decide if in-person, virtual or hybrid (both in-person and virtual) would make the most sense. Before you begin planning, check the below resources to ensure planning an in-person meeting is feasible:

- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
- [Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\)](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)
- [S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control \(SCDEHEC\)](#)
- [Federal](#) or [Government](#) Executive Orders
- [S.C. Legislature](#)
- [OSHA](#)
- [CDC Transportation Guidelines](#)
- [Uber](#)

Please see the Resource Guide for additional Information

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## Should You Host an In-Person Event?

- Are annual meetings legally required to meet in person or can they be held virtually? ([Resource 1](#))
- Is your industry directly impacted, making it inappropriate or contentious to consider hosting?
- Are attendees at risk, as defined by the CDC, or immune compromised as defined by participant?
- Survey board members, attendees, and sponsors to determine if they will attend the event. ([Resource 2](#))
- Do you have adequate staff and volunteer support to host an in-person meeting?
- Review all contracts for cancellation, postponement, penalties, etc.
- If attendees and sponsors/exhibitors are limited or cannot participate, can you reach financial goals?
- Consider possible new costs associated with safety and reduced attendance
  - Mailing materials in advance to reduce contact at registration
  - Additional meeting room space needs to accommodate social distancing
  - Do you need to purchase an event app or virtual platform?
  - Additional venue/hotel staff needed to provide safe meals, beverages, events, etc.
  - Personal safety gear for participants and/or staff (face coverings, sanitizer, gloves, etc.)
  - Additional supplies to consider: (*if not provided by the hotel*)
    - Easels for signage
    - Rope/ Stanchions and signage
    - Additional Pipe/Drape
    - Plexiglass for registration table/group check-in
    - Sanitizer Stations depending on number the hotel has on hand.
    - Participant Kits – Pen, pad, networking tool, hand sanitizer, etc.
- Can monetary goals be reached after all considerations?

## Considerations if Hosting an In-Person Meeting:

- Do you need to adjust the agenda to accommodate staggered breaks/mealtimes, longer bathroom breaks, cleaning between sessions, more time in the exhibit hall, etc.?
- No family or guests and consider eliminating standalone children's programs or offerings
- Limit registration or break up the event to accommodate smaller group sizes
- Broadcast to multiple rooms and livestream into hotel rooms to maximize attendee safe distancing
- Have more general sessions and fewer or no breakout sessions
- Will participants be able to hear one another over any ambient noise, while wearing facial coverings
- Determine participant cancellation and penalty policy for pandemic related reasons (*if applicable*)

### Registration

- Plan for no-touch or low-touch registration & Event
  - Use Plexiglass registration barrier
  - Enlarged print on nametags for greater visible
  - Do not recycle name badge holders/ribbons/supplies
    - Include emergency contact on the back of name badge in case of illness
  - Email/online/pre-mailed materials and program
  - Limited or no on-site registration

- If allowing on-site registration, ask attendee to register/pay through the website
- Set up a properly spaced, contactless pickup station for registration and onsite materials
- Assign times for registration based on last name or organization name

## Prospective Participant Communication

### Potential Communications

- Public Relations Statement surrounding the decision to cancel the meeting ([Resource 3](#))
- Communication regarding the decision to cancel the meeting ([Resource 3a](#))
- Statement surrounding the decision to postpone the meeting ([Resource 4](#))
- Communication surrounding the decision to host/cancel the meeting ([Resource 5](#))

### Considerations for Pre & Onsite Registration Webpage

- Risk waiver. (Seek legal counsel.) ([Resource 6](#))
- Consent for medical treatment ([Resource 7](#))
- Statements of Agreement asking them to obey all safety protocols ([Resource 8](#))
- Set a registration deadline to allow for mailing of materials or uploading to virtual platform

### Confirmation & “Before You Arrive” emails

- Request attendees utilize virtual/app-based networking, not business cards
- Ask attendees to bring their own note pads, pens and personal safety gear
  - Face coverings to be worn in the venue and at all event functions
- Communicate or link to facility, organization, and third-party vendor’s commitment to safety
- Communicate general overview of how things will look during the event in conjunction with venue guidelines (i.e. entries and exits, parking, cleaning procedures, F&B service, routing measures, flow of the exhibit hall, etc.)
- Explain color coding name badges or group assignment instructions, for seating, exhibit hall entry, breaking into smaller groups, etc.
- Communicate what to do and who to contact if you are not feeling well
- Communicate on-site registration restrictions and times to check in.

### Risk Management Plan

- Crisis communication plan in the event of an outbreak
- Crisis communication plan for non-compliance or personal protest
- Emergency contact information (name, phone, email) to have on hand:
  - Local Hospital
  - EMS
  - Local Public Health Department
  - Police
  - Venue safety contact
  - Your organization’s insurance information
  - Your organization’s legal contact information
- Secure Liability Insurance for all venues and ensure it covers illness
- Be sure to add a Force Majeure clause to all venues and rental contracts that includes cancellation and epidemic in the verbiage. ([Resource 9](#))

- Conduct internal debrief to understand opportunities for future events ([Resource 10](#))
- Send post event evaluation ([Resource 11](#))
- Per SC DHEC, organizations are not responsible for reporting to DHEC any attendee who tests positive or for contact tracing. SC DHEC might contact the host to request a list of all who attended/worked the event, if a person disclosed that they were at the event while contagious. ([Resource 12](#))

## Group Staff Policies and Procedures

*\*Planner should coordinate with the venue on providing adequate staff for each function considering increased needs. ([Resource 13](#))*

- Determine what staff is necessary to be onsite and who can work remotely.
- Do you need to consider working in shifts?
- Appoint and train an Event Pandemic Risk Coordinator(s) to ensure pandemic protocols are followed throughout the event
  - Reference/create listing of roles and responsibilities ([Resource 14](#))
- Designate trained COVID-19 event team. Assign shifts and allocate onsite tasks.
  - Ensure teams is easily identifiable to field participant concerns and questions
  - Have them roam during functions or stationed at entries/exits to event spaces ensure routing guidelines are being met.

## Signage Considerations

*\*Planner should coordinate with the venue and third parties on the signage each will provide. Use electronic signage as much as possible.*

### Types of Signage to Consider:

- Printed Signage
- Floor decals
- Electronic (TV, computer screen, etc.)
- Counter Signs
- Slides after presentations or during breaks/meals
- Stickers for tablecloths

### Subject Matter of Signage:

- Health & Safety Reminders- Outline of “Expectations of Participants” - latest CDC Guidelines
  - Personal safety gear requirements
  - Enhanced Social Distancing - remaining 6 ft. apart
  - Enhanced Hygiene
  - Wash the hands with soap
  - Utilize hand sanitizer
  - Cover the mouth
  - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the sleeve
  - Avoid touching the face

- Occupancy Limitations (meeting room, restaurant, elevator, etc.)
- Private Functions/Space Closures/Area Restrictions
- Entry/Exit Signage and Etiquette reminders
- Directional Floor Graphics
  - One-way traffic arrows
  - Floor marking indicating 6ft anywhere lines form (registration, check-in, meals, bars, etc.)
- Table Tents – (Menus, panelist, and attendee seating, etc.)
- Labels/Stickers for prepacked food or grab, go meals or attendee seating
- Additional health screening information on-site questions ([Resource 15](#))

## Facility

### General Cleaning and Disinfecting

- What are the venue's current policies regarding pandemics? (cancellation policies and penalties)
- Review venue's Pandemic/Sanitation Plan/Cleaning Protocols - request the maintenance schedule be posted so participants know what to expect.
  - Introduce Event Pandemic Risk Coordinator(s)
- Review how to handle a positive case/symptomatic participant
  - Does venue have a designated isolation room for potentially infected attendees?
  - Has staff been trained in use of advanced disinfection techniques? (use of disinfecting fogger or electrostatic sprayers with disinfecting mist and/or UV light)
    - [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)
  - Schedule and understand exact times venue will clean and sanitize each room and item
  - Keep event doors closed, locked, or sealed after disinfected, until next event begins.
- Can the facility accommodate the group with the new social distancing guidelines?
- Has the facility or city the facility is in, had a recent outbreak?
- Require all staff and guests wear face coverings when in indoors, including event space.
- Are restaurants, bars, onsite shops, and seating areas set to accommodate social distancing guidelines?
- Will staff help all guests follow the directions and protocol in place at the time of the event?
- Can venue provide wipes to sanitize restrooms, water fountains, elevators, etc. between cleanings?
- Ensure ample touchless hand sanitizer stations are strategically placed throughout the facility.
- Venue should implement no-touch options for doors (prop open, open with a foot stop or open by a gloved attendant).
- Are temperature checks performed on employees before each shift?
  - COVID-19 Fever Levels are:
    - Children 100.4<sup>0</sup> F and above (rectal temperature)
    - Adults 100.4<sup>0</sup> F and above (oral temperature)
    - Older Adults 100<sup>0</sup> F and above (oral temperature)

### Meeting Specific Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Clean and disinfect tables/chairs before and after every function
- Can staff float & clean tables/chairs during networking functions where food and beverage is served as individuals occupy and un-occupy tables? Consider tabletop signage/ Laminated cards that the

- gloved staff member can place on the table that states “This table has been sanitized.”
- Remove trash every 2 hours at minimum, or per CDC guidelines.
  - Increase number of trash cans and/or recycling bins in place of tray jacks for discarding disposable items and to prevent the collection of items with human contaminants.
  - For back to back panels with different panelists, chairs will need to be removed and sanitized in between sessions.
  - Any stage set ups (i.e. plants, flags, banners, pipe & drape) should be sanitized after placement and remain in the same location until stage is dismantled.
  - Work with venues on safe and sanitary table coverings. Is linenless an option? If using table linens, require attendee to use the same seat for the entire meeting.

### Multiple Groups in Facility

- What procedures are in place to ensure the safety of attendees?
- Communicate between venue and planners to determine what each group’s schedule of functions are and which spaces each group will use
- Create attendee flow, trying not to crossover break times and mealtimes
- Keep groups self-contained
- Assign separate bathrooms for each group if possible

### Hotel Check-in

- Queuing at counters, including front desk check-in and retail operations
- Consider online check in with key downloaded to phone
- Consider plexiglass dividers

### Guest Rooms

- Remove any hotel collateral, pens, notepads, etc. from sleeping rooms
- Venue may leave guest rooms untouched for 24 hours prior to arrival
- Limit housekeeping service (no contact linen, or amenities upon request, only)

### Elevators

- Capacity limits
- Can stairwells be used as alternative to elevators?

### Parking Measures

- Eliminate valet services, or determine and display sanitizing procedures
- Determine how pay stations are being sanitized/cleaned or if an attendant will be processing parking fees.
- Consider an option for participants to pre-pay for parking in advance as part of the registration fee or offer as sponsored option with no expense to attendees.

### Transportation



- What are drop-off and pickup measures for all commercial outside transit?

### Loading Dock

- What are loading dock schedule and procedures
- Use of venue push carts/dollies - sanitation
- How to handle materials that are being delivered through a conference freight handler

### Restrooms

- Capacity limits, queue line
- Will stalls be blocked off
- Will someone be staffed outside of entrance?
- Consider converting bathrooms if a group is predominantly one gender.

### Diagrams/Layout/Use of Space

- Use a [Social Distancing Room Space Calculator](#) to determine the number of people vs. square footage of space, as well as the best set up for all event functions
  - Planner, venue and third-party vendors should work together to diagram each event space, considering table spacing, room for wider aisles, locations of décor, hand sanitizer stations, etc. and guidelines for attendee routing.
- Remove hotel collateral (i.e. - pens, notepads, candy dishes, etc.) from meeting spaces.
- Avoid room set-up changes when possible and consider flipping meeting rooms under these modified conditions may not be feasible.
- Allow adequate space for AV tables, additional screens, cameras and risers.
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated and to support touch-free entry/exit points.
  - If doors need to remain closed, consider one gloved person to open/close doors
- Clearly mark entry and exit doors
  - If there is only 1 door, place signs on both sides reminding participants to allow only 1 person to enter/exit at a time.
- Utilize open-air spaces (outdoor, etc.) to hold programming when feasible, with proper weather considerations in place (proper coverage, tents, back-up spaces, outdoor heaters, or fans to extend use of tented space or other outdoor space etc.).
- Panel discussions (multiple speakers) will require six feet between speakers and individual handheld wireless mics or tabletop mics.
- If space is limited, consider assigning seats in meeting space so that participants are not changing seats. Attendees can eat at their assigned space in the meeting room.
- Determine smoking areas for the participants. Determine if additional ashtrays are needed to maintain 6-foot social distancing.
- Whenever possible, participants should not be positioned facing one another head-on while eating or drinking to minimize the exchange of respiratory droplets.
- Consider keeping Meeting Spaces separated from Meal Function Spaces so that attendees are not eating in the same areas people will sit for meetings

## Food & Beverage

### Food & Beverage/ Bartending Services:

- Consider staffing needs due to increased break, bar, beverage, and food service stations
- Venue staff to serve coffee or offer extra gloves or napkins to attendees to touch the dispenser
- Beverages at break stations should be chilled cans or bottles only
- Venue staff to deliver plated meals to overnight rooms, if available/needed
- Make sure queue line exists for all meals, breaks and bars
- Have staggered break times
- Eliminate any items that would require repeated touches (snack scoops, creamer dispenser, etc.).
- Is cash allowed to be exchanged at bars? If so, what are safe cash handling protocols.
- Have all venue staff who are serving food or bartending, use gloves and face coverings and serve behind plexiglass shields.
- Instruct attendees to dispose of cups bottles in trash cans and not to leave on tables
- If space or time is limited, package a bag with snack items to be given to attendees at registration

### Menu Selection

- Will meals be Self-Service (grab & go meal/break.) or Attendant Managed Service (buffet, stations)
- Select pre-packaged or individually packaged items (Muffins, breakfast/ lunch sandwiches, pastries, granola bars, yogurt, candy bars, chip bags, cookies, etc.)
- Use disposable plate ware, silverware, drinkware, etc.
- Use individually packaged items (butter, salt, pepper, sugar, creamers, salad dressing and fixings etc.)
- Select grab and go boxed meals or individually boxed items that make up the meal
- Label for allergies (i.e. gluten free, diabetic, vegetarian, peanut, shellfish, etc.)

## Sponsors & Exhibitors Considerations

- Utilize technology for networking with participants or provide participant contact list electronically
- Stagger load-in/load-out times to minimize crowds and usage of shared loading materials
- How many representatives will be allowed per booth space?
- Limit the number of people allowed to visit with a vendor to one person or family
- Set 10 ft. or 12 ft. booths, with 8' drape on each side (instead of 3')
- Set 4 ft. between each booth
- Assign staff to help control capacity and spacing inside exhibit hall based on square footage
- One-way, 6 ft. aisles, with passing lane or widen aisles for two-way traffic to be at least 10 ft.
  - Mark sure there is clear signage indicating participant traffic flow
  - Set single rows of exhibitors with each row facing the back of another row, allowing for a more seamless traffic path

### Timing of Expo/Tradeshow

- Event Team Members stationed at entrance and exit to check that participants are entering/exiting at the proper times

- Post ample signage outside of expo indicating access times of each group, also include on any digital attendee communications such as app, website
- Extend exhibit hall hours for a longer period throughout the day and avoid scheduling concurrent events (sessions, meals, etc.) during those hours. Possibly dedicated a day for expo

### Exhibitor Giveaways & Drawings

- Provided with explicit instruction for onsite giveaways or drawings at booths.
  - Encourage onsite vendors to display give away
  - Exhibitors should come prepared with their own methods of collecting business cards
    - Consider QR codes or touch free collection of participant information.
    - Consider using online platforms for drawing winners, post-event and use social media channels to live draw or announce winners.
  - Require exhibitors be gloved and items spaced out if giving out prizes.

## Additional Off-site Event Considerations

- If considering an off-site location for any portion of the event, choose one within walking distance of the primary meeting venue
- If walking, encourage social distancing by traveling in small groups (using badge colors) and staggering departures and arrivals at off-site venue (this would apply to the return as well)
- Confirm that there will be no delays upon group arrival for participants to be seated and/or to enter the function space to prevent back-up or participants congregating

## Networking Activities

- Avoid incorporating activities that increase the likelihood of aerosolization of respiratory particles (i.e. singing, heavy breathing, etc.)
- Avoid networking activities that rely on close contact, shared pen/paper, touching of game pieces by multiple players, exchange of business cards, etc.
- Consider activities that can play from their own phones or experienced from a distance
- Any new expectations that differ from past meetings and events (i.e. no dancing within 6 feet of others, handshakes, etc.) will require clear instructions.

## Speakers/Presentations

- No roaming into audience
- No selfies with attendees in close proximity
- Pre-signed books rather than book signing
- Send all event material and information electronically, via email, QR code or app
- Virtual networking/chat room to interface with presenters

- Speaker presentations submitted in advance and loaded on a computer run by the AV technician
- Ask speaker to bring their own clicker or use of “perfect cue” device for advancing slides by the AV tech, or have multiple clickers to rotate between speakers so one will always be sanitized and ready.
- Provide hand sanitizer on lectern, panel or head table.

## Technology/AV

### Considerations

- AV support to maintain reliable and consistent throughout the event
- Software/QR code for limitations on bar service instead of drink tickets or tokens
- Determine any increases in bandwidth required
- Use of mobile app to provide resources/updates
- Text service for notifications
- Additional screens, speakers, or equipment needs for announcements in multiple areas
- Ability to stream programming video feed across multiple break out rooms and/or in hotel rooms

### Sanitation Best Practices

- Request cleaning protocols in place for equipment.
- Frequently touch surfaces such as touchscreens, buttons, and panels require cleaning between each operator
- AV techs may allow a client to put on their own lavalier microphone with guidance
- AV techs should wear gloves when possible, sanitize before and after handling equipment and wear a mask when/if interacting when clients who need technical assistance.
- Disinfect lecterns, microphones, and cords after each use or consider swapping microphones
- The use of handheld microphones or shared microphones for audience Q&A should be avoided. Consider having participants submit questions electronically.
- All AV items in the meeting room should be managed only by the onsite AV tech. Speakers or event staff should be instructed to call for assistance instead of attempting to fix any issue.

## Hybrid Event

- **Music:** If you use music as part of your virtual meeting, you may need a license from [ASCAP](#), [BMI](#), or other performing rights organizations. The music license you need for broadcasting is different from the one you have for physical meetings. The same applies for commercial videos; licenses should be requested from the video owners or their agents
- **Scheduling & Timing:** Be mindful of time zones when determining number of days and time frames for virtual offerings, consider necessary agenda or timing adjustments needed.
- **ADA Allowances:** Participants who are Deaf and located in the United States may be able to use a dial-in conference line with their government-subsidized video relay service (VRS). The participant dials the conference number and a communications assistant at that service will translate the conference audio presentation into sign language, visible on a screen used by the

person who is Deaf. This incurs no extra cost for the conference but does require that the conference too supports dialing in by phone. In the United States and other countries, there are also commercial CART (communication access real-time translation) services that will provide real-time captioning, i.e., translating speech into text, for a fee. The text is typically shown to the participant on a web interface. For pre-recorded content, some video services such as YouTube can auto-caption stored videos. These captions need to be edited by the presenters for accuracy.

- Include technical support information, instructions, and links for participants to save-to-calendar, download app, access handouts, or set-up an account for virtual platforms
- Announce social media hashtags
- Announce sponsors – logos and/or video
- Instructions for networking and connecting with other participants and speakers
- Inform participants procedures to obtain continuing education credits
- Communicate any and all guidelines pertaining to attendee code of conduct regarding virtual chats

### Hybrid Tradeshow considerations

- Choose a platform or app with features that best meets the groups needs and allow sharing of information between participants and exhibitors
- If group faces budgetary or technology constraints a simplified option is posting an expo floorplan online with links to each exhibitor website, a video promo of vendor products and/or link to email a vendor directly to set-up a meeting time
- Ensure clear instruction is provided to help guide exhibitors in utilizing various features within the platform or application that will aid them in connecting with participants.

### Remote Audience

- Ensure the remote audience is actively engaged.
- Have a virtual host to serve as the link between the in-person and remote audiences.
- Consider screens or monitors throughout the room where the remote audience is projected
- Have a way for the in-person audience to network with the remote audience.
- Consider remote-only networking opportunities.

## Photography/Videography

- Most of the photography/videography we use in event promotions, as well as in other association print and digital publications, are often taken at our in-person events and many of the photos/videos do not comply with current health and safety guidelines (i.e. face coverings and social distancing).

## SC Safe Meetings Task Force

### Co-Chairs

Alexa Stillwell, Stillwell Strategies, LLC  
Susan Walters, South Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association

### Members

Donna Croom, 360 Meetings & Events, LLC  
Victoria Fernandez Wooley, Spartanburg Marriott  
Gloria Freeman, South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance  
Jim Headley, SC Recreation & Parks Association  
Megan Huebner, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of SC  
Ken Ivey, Municipal Association of South Carolina