



@Clint Brewer | PHOTO

# THE **NEW** NORMAL

A Guide to Visualizing, and Facilitating,  
the Post-Shutdown In-Person Meetings Environment

New, For Now...

The prognosis for the recovery of in-person meetings is still a bit murky, with a new variant of COVID-19 emerging throughout the world, but also with two vaccines—and more on the way—that hopefully will put the brakes on the pandemic.

In the meantime, meeting and event planners would be best served by shoring up their COVID-19 protocols for whatever in-person meeting they may intend to move forward with, no matter what size. Now is also the time to lock in in-person meetings for the third and fourth quarters of 2021 and beyond, with solid “out” contract clauses in case they need to be cancelled or rescheduled.

We hope you enjoy our third eHandbook, perhaps ironically titled *The New Normal*.



**Tyler Davidson**  
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We’ve held and been to a number of in-person meetings in the last six months, so we hope our experience will help you in your planning and execution.

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## Discover Dunwoody, Georgia

Positioned just above Atlanta, Dunwoody is a prime meeting destination. Whether requiring breakout rooms and banquet space or an upscale meeting with the finest amenities, Dunwoody offers the spaces and services to make it a smooth, seamless success.

Eight centrally located and chic hotels feature a combined 66,000-plus square feet of function space, and with newly renovated properties such as the Crowne Plaza Ravinia and the Marriott Perimeter Center, Dunwoody's event facilities offer the utmost in comfort, flexibility and modern features. Our roster of available meeting space is complemented by 1,900-plus hotel rooms that range from upscale to budget-friendly, all safeguard-

ed by state-of-the-art cleanliness protocols.

The city's central location and close proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, MARTA transit and major interstates allows guests and attendees the ability to travel in and out of Dunwoody quickly and easily. Once in town, guests will be at the heart of a wide range of dining options perfect for a team lunch or post-work happy hour.

The destination also offers unparalleled walkability to many outdoor activities and experiences, giving attendees a break from the boardroom for some fresh air. Factoring in location, cost and convenience, events of any size and style are unmatched in Dunwoody.

# Post Shut-Down Features

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated the meetings industry by halting travel and ceasing gatherings for both leisure and corporate markets. In order to showcase the destination's safety travel protocols, Discover Dunwoody hosted meeting and event planners from Maritz Global Events for "WeConnect Again," a safe, socially distanced event that offered a look at changes being made in Dunwoody.

During the gathering, which took place December 1-3, 2020, guests experienced

the destination's meeting and event spaces along with safe activities and dining venues. They also participated in informational discussions centered around the future of meetings, how an in-person meeting can happen safely and how to keep attendees' spirits alive during this unprecedented time.

The Discover Dunwoody team has plans for similar FAM tours and events throughout 2021 to continue the positive momentum set in December.

# Destination Highlights

Dunwoody's location and proximity to Atlanta means easy access to top hotels, flexible meeting spaces and memorable experiences; thus, making it an ideal and safe event destination. See the destination first-hand with the Dunwoody Virtual FAM Tour and plan confidently with the Discover Dunwoody team as your partner in hospitality.

"Our dedicated hotel partners have worked tirelessly to ensure that guests feel safe attending a meeting in Dunwoody," said Steven Schumacher, Discover Dunwoody's director of sales. "We look forward to safely welcoming groups back to Dunwoody to experience all we have to offer."

Every aspect of event coordination is prioritized by the Discover Dunwoody team

as we work directly with groups to gather RFPs, plan site visits and offer sponsorship incentive opportunities for financial assistance.

When you Discover Dunwoody, Georgia, you find a destination and team where going above is as important as going beyond.

## CONTACT

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## 4 Pre-Event Communication Strategies for Meeting Planners in the Pandemic Era

By Danielle LeBreck

Communication with attendees has always been key. In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, clear communication prior to an event is critical to the success of live meetings both financially and for attendee safety.

During the pandemic, pre-con communication is critical to whether attendees even consider following through with attending the meeting if they are leery of traveling and congregating with others.

While the meetings industry is still slowly

recovering as the world waited for increased rapid testing, vaccines (which are now being distributed) or a treatment that creates confidence in widespread travel and large gatherings, there have been some meetings and events moving forward.

Operating under an entirely new set of challenges such as sanitation, safety protocols and a drastic change in capacity limits and room layouts, meeting professionals are finding that one of the keys to jumpstarting

business again is having a well-defined pre-event communication strategy.

We talked to a few meeting planners who organized meetings in 2020, along with key partners like CVB and CSM professionals, to identify tips for pre-event communication success.

### Stay in Constant Communication With Event Partners

Before a meeting planner can effectively communicate the precautions and safety measures in place for a meeting to their attendees, consistent communication with key partners like CVBs, convention service

the city are receiving the most up-to-date information about the destination.

According to Visit Indy, since July 2020, the city has hosted 30 meetings spanning more than 50,000 attendees, with more on the horizon including the 2021 NCAA March Madness basketball tournament. This also follows \$7 million the city invested in safety and improvements of the Indiana Convention Center. The first event back at the convention center was the Tournament of Champions youth basketball tournament in July.

Amanda Ewing, director of event operations for the tournament, worked closely with Visit Indy, the Indiana Convention Center, hotels and the Marion County Health Department to have a health and safety plan approved before moving forward with the event.

“It was just a matter of staying current with everybody that was involved—the government, the CVB, the facility, all the players involved. It was really changing by the day,” she said.

As she worked with her partners, she constantly emailed updates to coaches of participating teams so everyone could stay up to date on the event.

“Right now, on the sales and services side, there’s a large need to team up with the CVB, the hotels and venues to provide that united front to make sure everyone is operating and telling the same story,” said Jamie Huckleberry, president of ESPA (Event Service Professionals Association)



managers, hotels and transportation providers is critical.

“To a planner who is thinking about a live meeting, the amount of safety precautions and health procedures that are put into place in each and every city seems daunting,” said Chris Gahl, senior vice president of Visit Indy. He explained that his CVB constantly works with local hospitality partners in Indianapolis to make sure that clients who have live meetings planned in

and director of event services for Pittsburgh's David L. Lawrence Convention Center. "You are going to see them on a lot of the calls for 2021 or longer...there's a lot on the meeting planner right now, so we can help answer those questions about restaurants, hotels, transportation, etc."

### Utilize Event Websites and Apps for Important Protocol Information

Paola Bowman, ESPA board member and the destination services manager for Texas' Arlington CVB, stresses that transparency is key to meetings moving forward.

"Don't downplay things, don't hide things," she said. "Transparency is super important right now—for everyone, for the planners and the attendees."

Gahl agreed.

"One of our mantras through the COVID-19 pandemic is transparency," he said. "We are transparent about how many cases there are, we don't hide behind the steps that we have been taking, and we pride ourselves with an unvarnished assessment of what has been happening."

"Every city has been bumped and bruised," he continued. "So in that same vein of transparency, we update each and every meeting planner that holds a live meeting about health restrictions, how things have opened up, and what's happening physically within the buildings."

Both Gahl's Visit Indy and Bowman's Arlington CVB have dedicated COVID-19

"know-before-you-go" information about their respective cities on their websites and can provide additional detailed information to planners upon request. Similarly, Huckleberry said that Pittsburgh's convention center—along with many other convention centers—houses detailed plans on its websites.

Katie Bohrer, vice president of meeting design and experience for Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI), recommended meeting planners source all of this information from partners and house it in one



KATIE BOHRER

central location for meeting attendees, so they can review plans in as much detail as they want or need. She does this for her events via the event website.

After planning her first tournament in Indianapolis, Ewing also found that a digital component like a website or app where all of the important COVID information can live is both extremely useful and can relieve a lot of headaches for planners. It can also eliminate the need for handouts and make filing documents like COVID-19 waivers easier, which attendees had to fill out and submit to her team every time they entered the convention center in the case contact tracing was needed.



“We have events in Phoenix starting in October, and we are implementing all of the same things we did in Indy, but we are going to do more digital,” she said. “That was my big takeaway—I wished all of this stuff was on an app—[attendees] can get the COVID waiver there, text updates and alerts, etc.”

### Schedule a Pre-Event Video Call With Attendees

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the important “know-before-you-go” information was often communicated to attendees just with these event websites and emails.

Now, as attendees gauge whether they are even comfortable or not with attending an

events last summer after the pandemic began, Bohrer was fielding a lot of these questions. That’s when she decided to take an extra step before the event she hadn’t before: Schedule a pre-conference video call with attendees focused on the travel and event experience.

“About 45 days out from our Florida event, we were like, ‘Wait a second, we are getting the same questions.’ So we thought, why don’t we pull together the key partners—an airline representative, a hotel representative and the planner, and present what we put have together,” she said.

In these Zoom-style forums, Bohrer has each rep walk attendees through the travel experience—from the plane to the hotel to the event itself. Participants can submit questions prior to the meeting or ask questions in real-time.

Bohrer made the decision to also invite prospective attendees to the call—those who were interested in attending but hadn’t officially registered.

“There are some people that have waited for that call to register; they wanted to make sure we had everything organized,” she said “The call shows [them] we have really thought about this.”

Even when the pandemic is over, Bohrer thinks these calls could become a normal pre-event communication strategy for her team.

“People like them,” she said. “We never did these informal calls, but now I think it makes people really excited. It’s a connec-



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ALHI BACK TO BUSINESS EXPERIENTIAL FORUM

event, this may not be enough. There are a lot of follow-up questions to address. What will the flight be like? Will there be temperature screenings at the hotel? Will attendees be required to wear masks throughout the event? How is food being served safely?

As she planned for her first few ALHI

tion point before you arrive.”

### Establish an Attendee Code of Conduct

A potential fear among prospective attendees deciding whether they want to attend a live event or not is that their fellow attendees won't commit to following the various



ALHI BACK TO BUSINESS EXPERIENTIAL FORUM MEETING

protocols meeting planners and event partners have set in place.

“I equate it to sharing the weather of the destination and the dress code,” Bohrer advised, nodding to the idea that many attendees don't bother to read or absorb this type of pre-convention information.

An added benefit to the pre-event video call method, Bohrer thinks, is that it also holds everyone on the call accountable to follow the safety precautions and guidelines put in place.

“Putting everyone on a call together—now you're having this shared experience and commitment together,” Bohrer explained. “Everyone on the call hears the same thing, and as an attendee this

becomes a shared responsibility. We are all in this together, and we are all going to commit to doing this as one group.”

Bowman agreed with this sentiment.

“The planner really needs to put out a duty of care, the ‘what we are doing to keep you safe.’ As attendees, you have to take a little bit of ownership of that. ‘If I'm sick, I'm not going to go to an event.’ It's a code of ethics for the attendee,” she said. “It's not rare to require your attendees to have some sort of oath.”

“We all have the same goal of bringing business back and this is the first step,” Bohrer concluded. “This is an increased level of hospitality—we are doing everything we can to make people feel comfortable.”



### Danielle LeBreck

*Lead Destinations Content Strategist*

Danielle started at Meetings Today in March 2019 after seven years of editorial experience in the travel and food industries. She oversees all of the destination content for Meetings Today and collaborates with the team on digital content strategy and content marketing initiatives.



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Following a year defined by uncertainty, one certainty remains—the team at Experience Columbia SC is here, ready to welcome you back. This experience has

challenged our staff to adapt and become even better equipped to provide creative solutions to your meeting needs.

Losing the human interaction we all once took for granted has renewed our zest and appreciation for the privilege of being able to sit down with you in person once more to talk through plans and bring your visions to life. Here, you'll find a community and hotel and restaurant industry that's resilient and pulled together to withstand these circumstances.

Whenever you're comfortable, set your sights on the possibilities of what lies ahead when you plan a meeting in Columbia SC.

# Real Meetings. Real Safe.

We are so thankful for the technology of virtual meetings, and we know that will continue to play an important role in the landscape of the meetings industry moving forward, but nothing compares with the real connections, ideas and engagement of gathering face to face. Your comfort level is important to us and your safety is paramount.

As we prepare to host you and your groups again, rest assured we and our hospitality community are following safety and sanitization

guidelines closely.

Our restaurants, hotels, venues and attractions are working hard to make sure their safety measures are above par. From limiting indoor capacities, providing hand sanitizer, installing sneeze guards, requiring daily staff health screenings, adhering to the City of Columbia mask ordinance, taking a local safety pledge and following CDC cleaning guidelines, our region is dedicated to putting your safety first.

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a world-class attraction, tour the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, experience our riverwalks and Lake Murray, see a guest room in a downtown hotel and more at [www.experiencecolumbiasc.com/visitor-info/virtual-tour](http://www.experiencecolumbiasc.com/visitor-info/virtual-tour).

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BONNIE WALLSH

# Site Inspections During a Pandemic: A COVID-19 Meetings Safety Checklist

By Bonnie Wallsh

Having been a meeting planner for nearly 40 years, I've been on my share of site inspections. However, I haven't done one for quite some time. Not because of the coronavirus pandemic, but because I'm trying my best to be retired!

Well, the cosmos seems to be conspiring against me, because even though I'm retired from full-time planning, I still like to keep active by volunteering or to put a few bucks in my pocket by doing piece-meal work, such as recently for the U.S. Census Bureau as an enumerator for their big count every 10 years.

When they discovered I was a meeting

planning veteran, they requested I make a site inspection of Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco for a series of two two-hour training sessions to be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for a revolving group of participants.

I was given the contact's name, telephone number and email address with a confirmation for an onsite visit the following morning. When I called to confirm the appointment with Svetlana Leykin, director of special events for the temple, we developed an immediate connection when we discovered that she came from Gomel—the same city in Belarus where my mother



was born. (Okay, that's beside the point, but interesting nonetheless!)

I inquired what specific information she needed from me and what entrance I should use at the synagogue, and that a colleague would be accompanying me, so I learned I had to provide her name in advance for security reasons, which unfortunately is all too common at synagogues.

Svetlana was joined by Penny Mika, director of operations and office administration, and Fabian Vazquez, building superintendent, who sat on chairs spread six feet apart as we reviewed meeting requirements and special COVID-19 arrangements for the training session. I asked if there was any other information that I should be aware of that I may not have asked.

Svetlana, Penny and Fabian were extremely professional and knowledgeable, and we all realized that these sessions are being planned under the very unique circumstances of COVID-19, and we needed to develop new policies and procedures.

To develop the following list of requirements, I collaborated with my daughter, Allison Wallsh-Levy, who is an occupancy planner for a commercial real estate firm.

## **A COVID-19 Meeting Safety Checklist**

As you prepare for your site inspection and compile your checklist, I recommend the following be added to customary site inspection checklists:

1. Develop a relationship with your contact in advance of your visit, particularly since facilities are likely to be short-staffed and under additional stress.
2. Inquire about which entrance door to the facility should be used.
3. Examine COVID protocols:
  - Health status can be determined using a temperature/health consent form.
  - Disclaimer about suing in case of contracting COVID-19.
  - Timing of participant arrivals to avoid congestion in advance of sessions, particularly when multiple shifts of sessions are held.
  - Prepare sanitizer station with masks/gloves/hand sanitizer.
  - Prepare registration area, possibly with plexiglass, and sufficient spacing to protect staff and attendees. Include containers with clean writing implements and used implements for sign-in sheets. Include a trash container.
  - Create signage using red arrows on Velcro and mark floors to indicate six-foot spacing and for directional flow.
  - Get floor plans to lay out tables and chairs for appropriate spacing and revised room capacity. Only one person should be placed at a six-foot table
  - As the room is set, be certain that the layout meets the requirements of the fire marshal.
  - Consider using furniture that can be wiped down.

- Plan an agenda that allows sufficient time for cleaning tables and chairs in between sessions.
- Check out the sound system. Normally a microphone is not necessary for less than 50 people, however, when speaking through a mask, amplification may be necessary.
- Check out internet connections.
- Check location of electrical outlets and access to them by participants. Power strips could be helpful to avoid close contact.
- Don't forget to follow Americans with Disability (ADA) requirements.
- Food and beverage should be limited to bottled water and boxed meals.
- Restroom breaks should be staggered, and restrooms should be cleaned while the group is in session. In the event that there are multiple stalls, such as three three-women stalls at Temple

Emanu-El, the middle stall should be closed to avoid close contact.

- Inquire about any issues that you should be aware of at the facility. For example, Temple Emanu-El requires a list of attendees 12 hours in advance, and that any meals brought in must meet Kashruth (Kosher) requirements.



**Bonnie Wallsh**

*Chief Strategist, Bonnie Wallsh Associates*

Bonnie Wallsh, CMM, CMP Emeritus, is chief strategist of Bonnie Wallsh Associates, a consulting and training firm. She has created, designed and managed events and taught courses at seven universities.

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### **A Hybrid Meetings How-To:**

***A Guide to Bridging the Meetings Experience  
Between Live and Online***

When in-person meetings and events resume, virtual meetings will still be a major part of the landscape. Learn the basics of hybrid meetings and the pitfalls to avoid as you bridge the attendee and stakeholder experience between live and online.

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## Huntsville/Madison County CVB

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The Von Braun Center features more than 170,000 square feet of space, which means plenty of room to offer ample social distance. Sanitization, including UV lights in portions of the HVAC system, is con-

tinuous, providing you and your attendees peace of mind. With more than 7,000 hotel rooms citywide, and many properties with meeting and event space of their own, we have lots of lodging and meeting space options from which to choose.

Attractions, including the U.S. Space & Rocket Center (home to Space Camp), the Huntsville Botanical Garden, the Huntsville Museum of Art and many others, are perfect venues for offsite activities for your group. Have you ever dined under an authentic Saturn V rocket? We can make that happen in Huntsville—Rocket City, USA! All systems are go for re-entry into the Rocket City.

# Your Health and Safety Is Our Top Priority

We take your health and safety seriously. Our partners are adhering to CDC and Alabama Department of Public Health guidelines regarding masks, sanitization and social distancing. We're enthusiastic participants in Alabama's Take It All In Responsibly campaign and have pledged to do all that is necessary to ensure the health and safety of you, your attendees and our team members.

We're proud to have hosted several successful conferences and events over the past few months. Meeting planners and attendees alike have expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for helping make their in-person event a reality.

Check out our website, [www.huntsville.org](http://www.huntsville.org), to see what we're doing to make Huntsville the perfect choice for your next conference or tradeshow.

## Growing to Meet Your Needs

The Von Braun Center has expanded. Mars Music Hall, a new multipurpose event venue, and Rhythm on Monroe, a restaurant complete with rooftop seating, opened early last year. Hotels are under construction in downtown Huntsville, including a Hampton Inn & Suites, Curio by Hilton, Autograph Hotel and Hyatt House, which will add 600 new rooms total to the heart of the city.

Other facilities like MidCity, Stovehouse and Campus No. 805 continue to grow and add new businesses and entertainment options for residents and visitors alike. An amphitheater is slated for construction in MidCity starting later this year. It joins another large outdoor venue, Toyota Field at

Town Madison, which opened last year and will be the home of the AA baseball Rocket City Trash Pandas.

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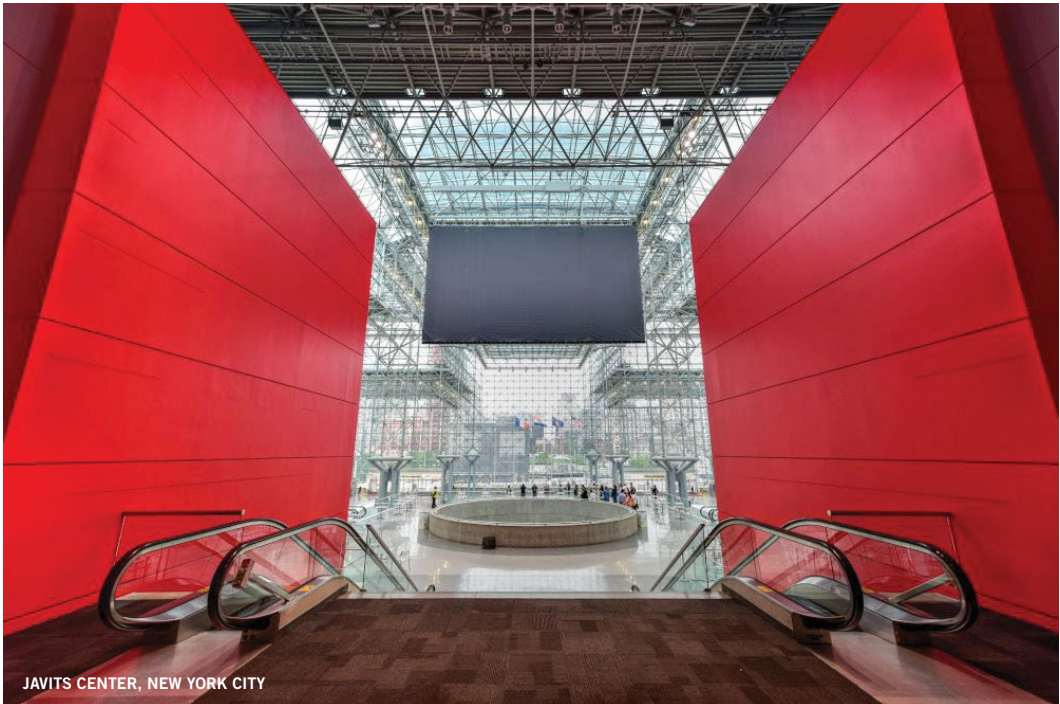
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JAVITS CENTER, NEW YORK CITY

# Key Indoor Air Quality Concerns for Meetings During COVID-19 and Beyond

By Tyler Davidson

As COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed throughout the world—albeit slowly, by many accounts—there is guarded optimism that there is light at the end of the tunnel for the viability of face-to-face meetings.

Although at the time of the publication of this article COVID-19 cases were spiking and the spread of a more contagious mutation of the virus was being reported globally, many are anticipating taking the first steps to plan in-person meetings and events in

the second half of 2021.

But while many are optimistic, the end user of meetings and events, attendees, may still be skeptical that they are meeting in a safe environment. And even if the illusive concept of “herd immunity” is achieved and business begins to return to normal, indoor air quality (IAQ), along with cleaning standards such as the GBAC STAR accreditation, will still be a top concern in facilities ranging from small boardrooms



to massive convention centers, especially during cold and flu season.

“The indoor air quality of a facility can either be a conduit to the spread of viral illnesses or it can be one of the most critical pieces we have in preventing them,” said Dan Diehl, CEO and president of Aircuity, a company that specializes in creating healthy indoor environments through its ventilation



DAN DIEHL

systems. “Not only that, [recent studies such as COGfx](#) have proven that IAQ can directly impact the ability to think critically—something which is key during conferences.”

Aircuity systems are currently installed in major meetings and events facilities such as Mohegan Sun Casino, Prudential Arena (home of the New Jersey Devils NHL team) and Resorts World Las Vegas, which at publication time was scheduled to open in summer 2021.

## What Planners Should Know About IAQ

In order to help ensure the safety of at-

tendees and quell any concerns they have attending an in-person event, meeting and event planners need to understand some basic information about the importance of indoor air quality and the systems that facilities offer to provide healthy ventilation.

“One of the ways that coronavirus and other viruses can be spread in poorly ventilated indoor spaces is through attachment to airborne particulates, so it is a priority to limit these as much as possible,” Diehl said. “Even if a building has recently upgraded its filters, administrators need to be able to quantify the impact. For example, a MERV 13 filter is only 40% efficient with a 0.3  $\mu\text{m}$  particle, whereas the same filter is 100% efficient with a 2.5  $\mu\text{m}$  micron particle. Using the right data, buildings can determine the ‘effective filtration rate’ and whether small particle levels are being mitigated.”

A key to mitigating airborne particles is to verify that enough dilutive air is being brought into the facility, which can be accomplished by having a reliable system to measure the amount of carbon dioxide in the space so additional air can be brought in where and when needed.

Healthy building certifications to consider when planning include the following:

- The International Well Building Institute’s WELL Building Standard
- RESET
- Fitwell

Planners can ask facilities the following questions:

- Is the facility measuring and managing IAQ?
- If yes, what are the measurements for particles, CO<sub>2</sub>, RH and TVOCs? The meeting planner can then reference [this chart](#) for healthy indoor air targets to see if it's in a safe range.
- Has the meeting location achieved any of the healthy building certifications, such as IWBI's WELL Building Standard, RESET and Fitwell?

### Critical IAQ Parameters to Know

According to Diehl, there are four key IAQ parameters to track when seeking to mitigate virus transmission:

- Total Volatile Organic Compounds
- Relative Humidity
- Airborne Particulates
- Carbon Dioxide

Each of the indicators must be continually measured and managed. Diehl's comments on each parameter are included below:

#### 1. Total Volatile Organic Compounds (TVOCs)

Implementation of sanitization and other enhanced cleaning protocols are a must to facilitate a safe return indoors. But be warned: Increased cleaning also means

increased use of chemicals that often dramatically increase the amount of TVOCs in the air. Facility operators should review TVOC data to ensure that it's in an acceptable range. A sensor system is the right tool for this; especially one that identifies any increase of TVOCs from cleaning and sends a signal to add more outside air until TVOC levels drop again.

#### 2. Relative Humidity (RH)

When RH is lowered to the 0%-40% range, respiratory immune defenses are impaired. At these RH levels, airborne droplets containing viruses evaporate and lighten, allowing the droplets to float longer and survive for a longer period of time. Due to these issues, facilities should work to provide higher relative humidity levels, ideally in the range of 40%-60% RH, especially in low humidity/peak viral season.

#### 3. Airborne Particulates

COVID-19, like other viruses, spreads by attaching itself to particles. In the indoor environment, this is especially dangerous and must be minimized. It's not enough that a building has recently upgraded its filters; the ability to quantify the impact is also imperative. Filter efficiency is generally lowest between 0.1-0.5 mm, which is the most dangerous for coronavirus transmission. Therefore, both small par-

ticles and those between 0.5-2.5 should be measured. Using the right data, facility operators can determine the “effective filtration rate” and whether the healthy small particle levels are being controlled.

#### 4. Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)

Facilities should verify they are bringing in enough dilution air and that the building has a reliable system to sense the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the space and bring in more when needed. The building should also use a high-quality analytics platform to look at CO<sub>2</sub> levels of the outside air, supply air and room air. By comparing these readings to science-based air quality standards, facility operators and planners will know if the building has adequate ventilation to control CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

#### IAQ’s Impact Beyond Virus Mitigation

Diehl said that Aircuity has seen an acceleration in the number of facilities that are interested in IAQ systems since the pandemic began, which was a continuation of an existing trend from before COVID-19. Besides combatting the spread of less-lethal viruses such as seasonal flu, studies point to good air quality providing a number of additional benefits.

The COGfx study, conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health’s Center for Health and the Global Environ-

ment, SUNY Upstate Medical University and Syracuse University, for example, demonstrated that indoor air quality in green building environments more than doubled the cognitive function scores of 109 test subjects.

#### A Tool to Measure IAQ

To help facilities analyze IAQ, Aircuity offers an analytics dashboard app that meeting and event planners convening in buildings with Aircuity systems could ask to see.

“Aircuity’s data platform is available to all customers,” Diehl said. “The building manager would certainly be able to share this with customers holding meetings at the facility if they choose to.”



#### Tyler Davidson

*Vice President & Chief Content Director*

Tyler Davidson has covered the travel trade for more than 27 years. In his current role with Meetings Today, Tyler leads the content team on its mission to provide the best meetings content in the industry.



# MEET



*outside of four walls*



**north lake tahoe**  
**get back to nature**

It's time to get back to meeting and back to sparking the creativity that only collaborating in-person can provide. Motivate your group with a change of scenery in breathtaking North Lake Tahoe.

**Visit [gotahoenorth.com/meetings](https://gotahoenorth.com/meetings) or call 1-800-462-5196  
to learn more and book your next event.**





## Meet In Nature

Tap into your group's desire to connect with the outdoors and meet beyond four walls where you can motivate your group with a much needed change of scenery. North Lake Tahoe creates a sense of wonder both inside and out with plenty of room to breathe and soak up some fresh mountain air. Inspire teambuilding by taking advantage of all the unique venues and group-focused activities North Lake Tahoe has to offer with plenty of space for physical distancing. The fresh air is invigorating, and when you add in the view,

something magical happens. From hiking to biking, kayaking to rock climbing, the right experience is just waiting to be discovered.

Plus, it's the perfect location to encourage or even incentivize attendees to bring their family along, since there are so many outdoor activities to keep everyone entertained. Don't let another year go by; it's time to get back to meeting and back to sparking the creativity that only collaborating in-person, and in a one-of-a-kind setting, can provide.

## Meet Comfortably & Spaciously

The offerings in the North Lake Tahoe area are diverse and unique, with more than 30 meeting sites in California and Nevada, 200,000 square feet of meeting space and

7,000 lodging rooms. From small group outdoor meeting spaces and timber-lined meeting rooms to upscale ballrooms that fit larger groups, planners never have a

problem finding the ideal location to motivate and exhilarate their attendees. Plus, each of the hotel properties and the other

unique venues offer thousands of outdoor spaces with an abundance of opportunities to spread out.

## Meet Safely & Responsibly

In this rapidly evolving landscape, it's important to feel at ease knowing that businesses are regularly adjusting procedures to align with current regulations. All the meeting venues and activity providers in North Lake Tahoe will be adhering to the most current federal, state and county mandates. Plus, attendees have the added bonus of having the North Lake Tahoe Convention & Visitors Bureau as their on-site planning partner to help double-check businesses for specific information regard-

ing their current operations and any modifications being implemented. Their goal is to provide groups with a safe and positive experience from start to finish. Some of these measures include daily health screening of all staff before guest interaction, touchless hand sanitizing stations throughout lodging properties, and reconfigured seating to meet and encourage physical distancing, along with enhanced Wi-Fi and additional areas designated for working remotely.

## Plan Your Meeting Now

Nothing compares to the wonder of North Lake Tahoe, with beautiful mountains and crystal-blue waters providing the ideal backdrop for meetings, entertaining and exploring. No matter what season you're here for—winter's wow, the dual days of spring, summer's official playground or fall's secret season—there's plenty to see and do to keep everyone engaged and wanting more.

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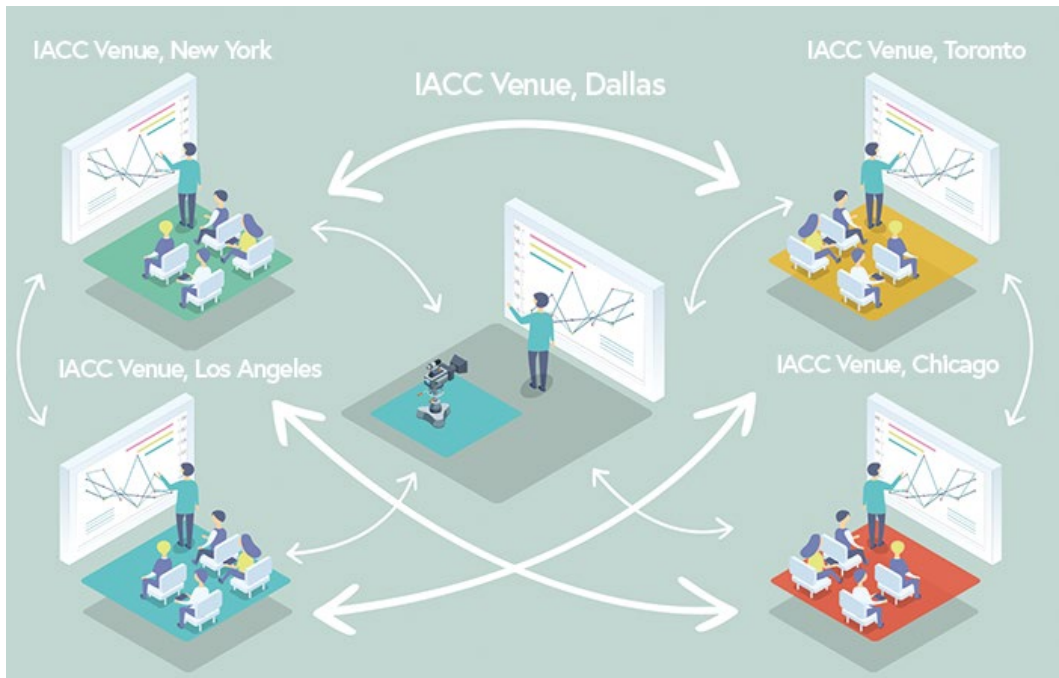
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# How Planners Are Hosting Large Meetings In Small Ways

By Sarah Kloepple

In late September, a directive from the Nevada governor allowed the state—including meetings mecca Las Vegas—to host up to 1,000 people at an event. But (and a major “but” at that), a venue would have to meet certain requirements to do so, including dividing attendees into separate groups or rooms that hold no more than 250 people or 50% capacity, whichever is less.

As some government regulations like this at the time of this writing are still intact around the country to curb the size of meetings and events in response to

COVID-19, smaller meetings—sometimes held in multiple rooms or locations—with a virtual component are becoming an appealing choice for planners.

This is where creativity and collaboration can really abound for MICE professionals when it comes to hosting a large meeting in a small way.

## Multi-Location Meetings

This fall, global conference centers association IACC introduced MultiPod, a multi-location connected meetings ap-

proach where a planner can host a live meeting with anywhere from two to 10 IACC-certified venues around the globe to lessen the number of attendees in one location and separate them by region. The different groups, or “pods,” can then interact virtually.

This not only reduces the perceived or real risk of bringing a large group together in the time of COVID-19, it can also



MARK COOPER

be more cost effective and broaden an organization's reach.

“You're also just being a more forward-thinking organization,”

said IACC CEO Mark Cooper. “If you adopt this process, and your organization has a culture or objective to be seen as a thought leader or pioneer in any industry, then this is embracing a more modern way of doing something and can really add to the objectives of the meeting, as opposed to being seen as a traditionalist organization that's finding it difficult to break away from the way we used to do things in 2019.”

Cooper said the MultiPod approach was inspired by a planner with whom he worked, and the two realized it still might be difficult to bring a large number of peo-

ple together in one location even if government restrictions were lifted.

With MultiPod at IACC-certified venues, attendees can expect well-developed technology solutions and a dedicated in-house AV staff to help steer the virtual ship. Cooper says that IACC venues also have the propensity to collaborate with each other.

“They already have this openness to working together,” he said. “Even though the venues are not aligned in terms of ownership or brand in any way, they share customers and have a good relationship. So we thought of it much like the peeling of an onion—there's multiple layers to this approach that involve more than just technology.”

Cooper said the standard number of locations for potential MultiPod events so far, from planners looking into the approach, has been around two or three. IACC plans to host its annual conference next March in five different locations: Toronto, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas and Los Angeles. People will be able to attend virtually as well.

### Drive-To Meetings

As planners look to ease attendees' minds about the risk of COVID-19, some CVBs in smaller locales are finding that their ease of accessibility by car and smaller size are becoming more of a selling point.

“That's definitely a twist that we're putting on our sell,” said Jessica Bittman,

director of sales for Delaware's Greater Wilmington CVB. "We're advertising even more to our drive-to market—not just for meetings, but also for leisure travelers and things of that nature....The fact that people can drive here and not have to go on an airplane is going to be a huge sell for us, as planners look into future years. And also the fact that we are a smaller city."

Bittman added that she always likes to remind planners that Delaware is tax-free.

"Right now, ROI is really important," she says. "[Being tax-free means] it's a quick savings right off the bottom line, to not have to pay tax on your room rentals and whatnot."

Farther north in Albany, New York, director of sales for Discover Albany Jay Cloutier said that lead activity has been somewhat drive-market related.

"We are getting those regional RFPs that view Albany as reachable by a bigger number of attendees because of centrality," he said. "We have seen lead activity based on that. It's an easier drive market for a bigger block of potential attendees."

This past August, Albany hosted an event for a hockey association at the Capital Center, where 25 people met in person to discuss pressing issues pertaining to their sport and COVID-19. The other half of attendees were conferenced in via Zoom.

"I would point to that as a success story," Cloutier said. "These individuals are incredibly passionate, and they saw some

challenges with their work that required them to get together in person."

### Creative Solutions

With some travel and meeting restrictions still in place, creative solutions like MultiPod and putting more focus on regional, drive-to destinations has proven to be a boon for planners when it comes to in-person opportunities.

For more information on MultiPod, visit [lacconline.org](http://lacconline.org).

"This isn't a commercial operation for IACC," Cooper said. "This is IACC helping to bring together the best solutions and create the framework...So do come to us, even if you're only thinking about it conceptually, because we'll be happy to talk through the approach."



### Sarah Kloepple

*Content Developer, Destinations and Features*

Sarah Kloepple joined Stamats Business Media as a staff writer in August 2018. She is a graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism, where her focus was magazine writing. She's written and edited for numerous publications in her hometown of St. Louis.