

Responsible Conferencing In New Zealand Catering & Networking

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 organisation 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.

We thank and acknowledge all those who contributed to the research and development of this resource.

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Communication

Prior to and/or On Site

- Communicate importance of social distancing, personal safety gear recommendations, hygiene, guidelines, and etiquette in accordance with latest Government guidelines.
- Communicate event expectations including as applicable: Traffic flow, agenda, QR-code for menu, networking RFID instructions, continuing education procedures and instructions, and silent auction instructions.
- Reminder about staying with assigned groups for seating and break dismissals. Communicate sanitising precautions venue has implemented with attendees, exhibitors, speakers and staff
- Communicate what to do and who to contact if you are not feeling well and location of isolation room, if applicable.
- Slide insert to remind attendees of hygiene best practices before and after each presentation

Staff Policies and Procedures

- Consult OSHA COVID-19 Guidelines
- Conduct Employee Training on COVID-19 policy changes
 - Designate staff for the COVID-19 team and allocate tasks
 - Establish isolation room/area
 - Designate Team Member for every shift to enforce COVID-19 policies

Venue

- Planners and participants need to feel safe
 - Communicating with staff onsite, text vs. in person vs. radio

Space Requirements

Use of Space

To accommodate anticipated social distancing requirements, larger spaces will likely be required to accommodate smaller group sizes.

- Determine what room set will work best to achieve social distancing
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated.
- Consider converting bathrooms if a group is predominantly one gender. For example, if the profile of a group is 99% women, convert a men's bathroom to a women's for greater social distancing.
- Number of people in relation to square footage
 - Follow the current requirements for spacing between people and tables
 - Require a temp checking space
- Provide isolation facilities during event for participants who develop symptoms
- Break up General Sessions into smaller groups in separate smaller rooms throughout the facility and connect via Virtual streaming
- Color code attendee seating areas
- Consider that meeting rooms may not be able to be "flipped" ○ Avoid use of table linen where possible. Linens must be replaced between participants if linen-less is not an option.
- Sample templates for room diagrams (consider spacing between people and spacing between tables)
 - Rounds
 - Classroom
 - Theater

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- Reception
- Break areas
- Registration
- Indoors -vs- outdoors
- Can outdoor spaces be utilised? o Tents
 - o Parking lots; city lots
 - o Until the risk of contagion has passed, avoid incorporating activities in event that increase the likelihood of aerosolisation of respiratory particles, e.g. singing, heavy breathing, etc.

Multiple Groups in House

- Assign different areas in venue – keep groups as separate as possible
- Develop procedures to handle more than one group o Contractual obligations/considerations
 - Reduction of attendance numbers/capacity due to social distancing guidelines
 - Cancellation if space limitations prevent facility from accommodating event due to new social distancing requirements.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Before and after meal periods
- Sanitizing stations in all networking / meal space
 - o Facility sanitization plan
 - o Allow extra time in agenda for cleaning and disinfecting

Catering and Breaks

Location of Catering Service

- Can meals /networking be broken into smaller groups?

Meeting Room

Allocate appropriate space to meet social distancing and spacing requirements

- Consider grab and go
- Staff coffee station with staff to pour
- Consider boxed meals
- Release by table numbers to eliminate crowding
- Serve plated meals

Scheduling of Meals

- Separate spaces for meals /breaks if possible with venue or budget
- Stagger times so everyone not present in the room at the same time
- Restroom traffic patterns / number of participants limited
- Entering and exiting protocols
- Tape on floor for staffed buffet lines
- One-way walking patterns utilised

Travel to/from Meals

- Signage for traffic patterns and social distancing
- Stanchions available to divide common areas
- Doors propped open
- Attendants to open all meal entrance doors

Menu Selection

- Develop a menu that is flexible to accommodate last minute lowering of counts
 - Keep menus simple for ease of adjusting numbers and minimising service requirements
- Prepackaged items may allow for faster rotation of breaks
 - Individually packaged means less human touch
 - Muffins, pastries, granola bars, chip bags, Chex mix, cookies, etc.
- Disposable plate ware, silverware
 - Requires less staffing
 - Attendees can dispose, some venues can compost
- Single-use salt/pepper, condiment packets, coffee sugar packages
- Grab and go box
 - Individually boxed items that make up the meal
 - Salad fixings in individual cups
 - Contact free for participants
- Boxed meals
 - Pre-packed and preset boxes
 - Theme items preset
 - Breakfast, lunch, dinners all prepackaged and labeled
 - Label for allergies
- Designated area to eat with spacing accordingly
 - Tables spacing
 - Outside seating
 - Foyer seating

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- Overnight room if absolutely necessary (limit only for those who require, similar to how a special meal accommodation is handled)

Scheduling of Breaks

- Stagger times of breaks for group and rotate for smaller groups
- Simple breaks to allow for multiple groups to go through line
- Subdivide group with breaks alternately scheduled
 - Group 1 has 5 minutes, then group 2, etc.
- Could be different groups each day – be creative when setting up subgroups
- If a meeting has a break(s) scheduled later in the day, box the break items and distribute at an earlier meal period.
 - For example, give participants the afternoon breaks boxed items at lunch so that it helps with congestion when the group breaks.
 - Consider doing a boxed continental breakfast and distribute break items at morning registration.
- Accommodate time for transitions
 - Plan for break areas nearby to reduce travel
 - Provide directions to break area
 - Allocate time for phone calls
 - Allocate time for bathroom breaks
 - Keep the group in one area

Staffing

- Staffing needed to serve coffee breaks
- Staff to wear personal safety gear and sanitize in compliance with Government guidelines
 - Empty and remove rubbish in compliance with Government guidelines
- Increase number of bars needed to maintain social distancing
 - Consider pre-mixed or machine-generated drinks
- Increase number of staffing for buffets
- No self-service for buffets – staff serviced buffets only
- Staff on the floor to remind about social distancing and one-direction route
- Staff to deliver meals/breaks to overnight rooms, if available/ needed

Signage

- Social Distance Graph Reminders
- Health & Safety Reminders - latest Government Guidelines
- Movement Restrictions
- Occupancy Restrictions
- Open / Closed to Visitors
- No Entry
- Directional Floor Graphics (one-way traffic arrows)
- Counter Signs
- Table Tents - Menus
- Labels / Stickers for prepacked food or grab and go meals
- Elevator lines and capacities
- Hygiene best practices graph

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- Personal safety gear reminders
- Bathrooms- Hand Washing Reminders, Enter/ Exit etiquette
- Hand Sanitizer Stations
- Isolation Area

Technology

Considerations

- IT Support to maintain reliability
- In house system that connects to room to allow for hybrid networking
- Can technology be used for hybrid networking?
- Software/QR code for monitoring bar service instead of drink tickets or tokens
- Use of mobile app to provide resources

Cleaning/disinfecting Equipment Between Speakers

- Disinfecting podiums, microphones, and cords
 - Consider completely swapping microphones
- Microphones possibly needed in smaller spaces if sound projection level reduced due to masks, plexiglass shields or other protective equipment.

Social Distancing for Presenters

- No roaming into audience
- Pre-signed books rather than book signing
- QR code or email for handouts
- Virtual networking/chat room to interface with presenters

Supplies

- Plexiglass for staffed buffet stations
- Tents, possibly
- Outdoor heaters to extend use of tented space or other outdoor space
- Personal safety gear
- Personal pen use...no pens/paper on tables or wrapped pens
- Additional easels for signage
- Stanchions
- Additional trash bins with durable liners
- Sanitizer Checklist Stations –touch-less dispensers at room entrance and food stations, elevators, by railings, water fountains, staircase/escalators,
- Participant Kits – Pens, Badge, Networking tool -- RFID, Hand Sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, swag, sanitized bag to store mask
- Table numbers or color coding for assigned seating
- Tape – mark social distance perimeters on carpet so participants remain disciplined •
Floor arrows for directions/routing

Networking

For those attending in-person meetings and events, networking often ranks as the most important and valuable element of the program. Attendees and volunteers wish to reconnect with long-time industry friends; exhibitors and sponsors wish to engage with current customers while also identifying new leads; and staff wish to meet up with those they spend a majority of the year working with by phone and email.

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Usual social protocols for meeting and networking with people, including handshakes and hugs, should be avoided. This will be a big change for our organisations, our events and our participants – and it may even result in some unexpected emotions to bubble up. Consider how your people may react (e.g., mad, sad, grief, depressed) and explore ways in which you can support them before, during and after your program.

Additionally, announcements should be made during general sessions and reinforced through signage. Particularly during receptions, organisation/venue staff should plan to roam and reinforce expectations. New, culturally appropriate greetings for your group (e.g., a hand over the heart with a slight head nod), should be introduced, demonstrated and role modeled by both association and venue staff.

Additional key considerations include:

- Business cards – Can you implement a touchless exchange of information?
- Name tags – Are you using them? Will participants be able to see one another's names from 2 mtrs away?
- Facial coverings – Will participants be able to hear one another over any ambient noise (e.g., music)?
- Facial expressions – How will you help participants express themselves while wearing facial coverings?

Receptions

Traditional receptions that rely heavily on food and bars will have to be re-thought. Often, activities are striped from these events to save resources, as well as to ensure the structure doesn't interfere with organic networking opportunities. However, social distancing receptions are aided by more rather than less structure. This includes but is not limited to entry and exit protocols, one-way traffic flow, seating assignments (as appropriate), designated bars/food stations (e.g., assigned by table, section of the room or last name), and a wellplanned/choreographed agenda with adequate time segments.

Highboys and seating arrangements that promote groups of people to congregate should be avoided. Microphones and other AV may be needed to provide adequate instruction, particularly while wearing facial coverings. Planners may wish to provide paper or plastic bags as part of the event welcome kit as safe and sanitary storage for facial coverings while participants are eating or drinking. Whenever possible, participants should not be positioned facing one another head-on while eating or drinking so as to minimise the exchange of respiratory droplets.

Activities

Networking activities that rely on close contact, shared pen/paper, touching of game pieces by multiple players and the like should be avoided. Instead, consider activities participants can play from their own phones (e.g., trivia) or activities participants can experience from a distance (e.g., listening to music or enjoying art installations). Any new expectations that differ from past meetings and events (e.g., no dancing within 1 m of others) will require clear instructions, gentle reminders and enforcement protocols, as needed.

Remote Audience

For hybrid meetings, ensure the remote audience is actively engaged. Have a virtual host or social correspondent serve as the link between the in-person and remote audiences. Talk about what the in-person audience is eating, drinking and doing. Ask the remote audience similar questions. Consider

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screens or monitors throughout the room where the remote audience is projected, as well as a station in the room where the in-person audience can go to network first-hand with the remote audience.

If possible, coordinate a shared experience for the in-person and remote audiences to participate in at the same time. For example, consider sending the remote audience the dried fruit they'd need to make the perfect sangria at home (and encourage them to provide their favorite spirit or sparkling water). Then maybe serve the same cocktail to the in-person audience and have a local celebrity bartender talk about the history and science of the drink.

Finally, consider remote-only networking opportunities so those joining virtually begin to gel as a cohort.

Photography/Videography

Most of the photography/videography we use in event promotions, as well as in other association print (e.g., magazine and brochures) and digital publications (e.g., website and social media), are often taken at our in-person events. And much of the photos/videos we're utilising do not comply with current health and safety guidelines (e.g., face coverings and social distancing).

Using your usual systems for both informing participants about photos/videos and gaining their consent, be sure to take photos/videos during both learning and networking times for use in future promotions and publications.