



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
MEETINGS & EVENTS  
COVID-19  
SAFE RESTART GUIDELINES

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BC Meetings & Events  
Industry Working Group

*REVISED* - September 3, 2020

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# INTRODUCTION

The BC Meetings & Events Industry has been a significant economic driver within the Tourism & Hospitality Industry, both in British Columbia and within Canada. Our industry has produced world-class meetings, conferences and events welcoming people, companies and organizations from within BC, across Canada and around the world to meet and engage in our spectacular destinations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a near-complete shut down of our businesses.

The businesses within the sector that produce and provide services for meetings & events in BC are diverse, ranging from event production companies to meeting and event planners; destination, conference and exhibition management companies; caterers; technical designers; A/V and lighting specialists; decor and furniture suppliers; promotional products and gifting companies; set designers and construction companies; tenting and rental suppliers; etc.; as well as the hotels, convention centres and venues that house these groups.

As part of the BC Tourism Industry's collective recovery initiatives, leaders from a cross-section of businesses in the province have formed the BC Meetings & Events Industry Working Group to develop a set of high level guidelines for companies operating in this sector. The guidelines are intended to support a safe restart of our businesses amidst the COVID-19 pandemic by encouraging the adoption of best practices in future planning and servicing of meetings & events. Incorporating these guidelines in risk mitigation plans will allow our companies to build consumer confidence and prove to the provincial government that our businesses are prepared for a phased approach to the reopening of the industry.

This document has been reviewed by **WorkSafeBC**, **BC's Provincial Health Ministry** and the **BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)**. It is being endorsed by and distributed to the industry through various provincial DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) and industry associations, specifically ILEA (International Live Event Association), MPI (Meetings Professionals International), PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association), FVEPA (Fraser Valley Event Planning Association) and TIABC (Tourism Industry Association of BC).

The document prefaces the list of guidelines with a situational overview of our industry, describing the effects of COVID-19 on meetings & events, the economic need for a safe restart, and indicators of our state of preparedness.

A list of collaborators can be found in Appendix D.



# PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is to present service providers of meetings & events in BC with a set of recommendations that are consistent, simple, practical, appropriate, and follow current provincial COVID-19 health & safety requirements. The expectation is that our industry, through our various representative member associations and organizations, will endorse and implement these guidelines as part of future planning. In doing so, we continue to put the health, safety and security of meetings & events attendees, and that of the industry's supporting workforce, as our top priority.

The guidelines adhere to the latest recommendations and mandates provided by our BC Provincial Health Ministry, our Provincial Health Officer (PHO), Dr. Bonnie Henry, Health Canada, the BCCDC and the World Health Organization (WHO). These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the most current and relevant provincial, regional and local legislation, regulations, mandates, health orders and policies, which may evolve over time as our province's phased restart plan progresses.

The guidelines are intended to align with recommendations developed in other provinces, (e.g. Alberta), and other industry sectors, such as the Canadian Exhibition Industry, the hotel and restaurant industries and convention centres/venues across the country.

A list of reference documents and websites consulted is provided in Appendix C.

**Important Resource: Provincial Health Orders related to COVID-19 can be found here:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>



# SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak became a global issue and was declared a pandemic by the WHO. The Canadian Government closed our international borders to all but essential travel and introduced mandatory self-isolation for anyone entering the country from abroad. British Columbia introduced health-related restrictions and banned gatherings indefinitely. While severe, these health and travel restrictions were necessary measures so Canada and BC could mitigate transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and ensure the health and safety of all Canadians.

As we prepare to enter the last quarter of 2020, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue around the globe until transmission is stopped by public health measures or widespread immunity. Ongoing cases are expected during the months ahead and public health responses will continue to evolve as information and learnings become more widely available.

## Contribution of Business Meetings & Events to BC's and Canada's Economy

Tourism is one of British Columbia's leading economic sectors. Business meetings & events make up a large segment of both BC's and Canada's tourism economy and are significant throughout every region of the province.

Meetings Mean Business Canada (MMBC) and Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) reported in 2017 that **business events contribute over \$33.1 billion to the Canadian economy**, generate an estimated **229,000 direct jobs** and constitute **\$19.3 billion of direct GDP**.



Sources: [https://tiac-aitc.ca/\\_Library/Travel\\_Economy\\_Series\\_/MEETINGS\\_-\\_TIAC\\_Travel\\_Economy\\_Series\\_EN.pdf](https://tiac-aitc.ca/_Library/Travel_Economy_Series_/MEETINGS_-_TIAC_Travel_Economy_Series_EN.pdf)  
<https://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.ca/>

## Impact of the Pandemic on the Meetings & Events Industry

COVID-19 and related response measures have had immediate and long-lasting consequences on the meetings & events industry globally. The industry was one of the first to be shut down and is currently slated to be among the last to restart.

As of June 30, 2020, **Destination Canada's "COVID-19 Impact and Recovery Report: Business Events,"** estimated the total losses to the sector since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic at **3,053 events, 1.33M delegates and nearly \$1.17B in direct visitor spending.\*** These numbers only reference cross-border and international events reported into Destination Canada; they do not include cancellations of domestic events within Canada or smaller meetings, events and incentives that are not reported to local or regional DMOs. These numbers will continue to climb for the rest of 2020 and beyond until borders re-open and mandatory quarantines for visitors are lifted.

While similar provincial data is not available, **Tourism Vancouver's "Event Impact Summary"** reports that the cancellation of business events in the city due to COVID-19 totals a **loss of \$198M in direct group business.** The **overall economic impact** from these lost groups is estimated at **-\$320M** for Vancouver. The provincial impact is exponentially greater.\*

In BC, tens of thousands of jobs have been lost by employees and contractors who work within the meetings & events industry. As the province enters Phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan, there is a slow emergence of small-group events for 50 people or less. The resumption of these events under the current restrictions will not support any significant economic recovery in the industry. Without an impending restart of business, the viability of our industry and job recovery is catastrophically threatened. The livelihoods, mental health and well-being of our industry's workers are severely compromised.



### Destination Canada's "COVID-19 Impact and Recovery Report: Business Events,"

|                                                     | Events | Delegates  | Direct Spending |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|----|
| Total Estimated COVID-19 Losses as of June 30, 2020 | -3,053 | -1,327,355 | -\$1.166B       | ~* |

Source: [https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1112-COVID-19%20Impact%20and%20Recovery%20Report%20-%20Business%20Events%20-%20June%2030%2C%202020/COVID-19%20Impact%20and%20Recovery%20Report\\_BE\\_June30\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1112-COVID-19%20Impact%20and%20Recovery%20Report%20-%20Business%20Events%20-%20June%2030%2C%202020/COVID-19%20Impact%20and%20Recovery%20Report_BE_June30_FINAL_EN.pdf)

**\*Data represents figures reported into local, regional and national DMOs, tourism bureaus and convention centres. only. A significant number of meetings & events are booked directly with hotels and vendors, and are not captured in this data. .**

## Restart Requires Longer Lead Time than Other Sectors

The BC Meetings & Events Industry cannot immediately restart in the same way restaurants and retail businesses can. Our industry operates on a much longer business cycle. Meetings & events take considerable lead time to prepare – usually 6 to 12 months of planning is required. Our industry relies on consumer confidence and lifting of restrictions as the impetus for businesses and groups to start to procure services again. Once restrictions are lifted, it will take months to execute an event and to start seeing economic recovery. Thus, there is urgency to reopen as soon as safely possible.



## Distinction Between Business Meetings and Mass Gatherings

A clear distinction should be made between the nature of business meetings & events and that of mass gatherings. The WHO defines mass gatherings as events that have the potential of compromising the medical system, where the “number of people attending is sufficient to strain the planning and response resources of the community, city, or nation hosting the event.” Business events can be much smaller gatherings. While they can involve regional, national or global groups of people, a phased reopening of events during travel restrictions can begin with smaller, local events to restore confidence in the safety of responsible group gatherings. This type of graduated approach has been occurring in other sectors in BC; e.g. the resumption of team sports throughout Phase 2/3 of the restart plan, as well as in-class learning in schools in June.

Business events at their core already have a controlled environment, with the ability to determine the degree of social interaction and to apply mitigation and control measures more easily. Business events are generally held in low-risk environments, attended by invited, pre-registered and qualified attendees only, with the guest count and identity of attendees known in advance. These factors allow for flexibility for planners to design layouts that accommodate physical distancing, safe density ratios and capacity restrictions; and they facilitate the ability to manage contact tracing. Business event organizers should continue to do what they have always done: maintain control over the flow of traffic, and manage and direct the movement of attendees from arrival at the venue, to entering and navigating the site, to food and beverage areas, as well as restroom facilities. Added priorities will be to ensure adequate social distancing, sanitation and low-touch/zero-touch environments.

Business meetings & events are exclusive, by invitation only, where every aspect is pre-planned and monitored. They are designed to control the intensity of social interaction, and are developed with well-prepared contingency plans. Meetings & events are fundamentally different from and more controlled than public festivals, concerts and sporting events. The BC Meetings & Events Industry is by nature ready for a controlled restart of its operations.



## Positive Ripple Effect of our Industry on the Wider Economy

According to the 2018 "Global Economic Significance of Business Events Study," conducted by Oxford Economics, the meetings & events industry is a vital driver with significant economic impact across a wide range of supporting businesses. These include supplier businesses, labour, and the communities in which they operate, ie. hotels, convention centres, restaurants, attractions, logistics providers, A/V and design companies and many others.

The BC Meetings & Events Industry is part of the visitor economy that will support the restart of sectors within the tourism ecosystem. The resulting spin off effect will help drive a strong economic recovery in British Columbia.



Source: <https://insights.eventscouncil.org/Full-Article/ArtMID/398/ArticleID/1445/2018-Global-Economic-Significance-of-Business-Events>



# THE MEETINGS & EVENTS INDUSTRY IS PREPARED FOR A SAFE RESTART

British Columbia will benefit greatly from the safe return of business meetings & events. This return to business will fuel BC's economy, promoting innovation, sparking creativity, supporting local communities and helping to get thousands of British Columbians back to work safely. In the same way that restaurants, hotels and grocery stores have been able to adapt to operate safely, meetings & events can also operate safely by implementing appropriate physical distancing, health and safety measures and enhanced crowd control protocols in accordance with guidelines issued by BC's PHO and local health authorities.

|                                                                                    |                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HOW</b> - controlled procurement from specialized suppliers                     | <b>WHO</b> - exclusive group of attendees led by professionals experienced in monitoring the success of the event |
| <b>WHY</b> - to exchange knowledge, solve problems, promote and inspire innovation | <b>WHAT</b> - physically distanced, in-person meetings & events for small, invitation-only groups                 |
| <b>WHEN</b> - fixed dates, scheduled well in advance                               | <b>WHERE</b> - pre-selected, thoughtfully sourced, spacious indoor or outdoor settings                            |

## Indicators the Industry is Prepared

Once the Province of British Columbia and the PHO allow controlled gatherings over 50 people for the purpose of business meetings & events, the BC Meetings & Events Industry is well positioned for a safe restart given the following rationale:

1. Business meetings & events traditionally take place in controlled environments that are not open to the public. They are held in privately booked spaces and venues where attendees are part of a closed group of invited and/or pre-registered guests and where personal contact information is collected.
2. The demographic of business meetings & events tends to be made up of people from the same company, organization, industry or group who are conditioned to following pre-planned agendas and receiving direct, detailed communication, messaging and instruction both in advance of and during the meetings & events.
3. The design and layout of business meetings & events can be customized in scope and group size to the space, allowing for physical distancing, crowd control, health, safety and hygiene measures.
4. The industry's framework includes companies and partnerships from global industry brands recognized for standards of excellence in health & safety.
5. The BC Meetings & Events Industry has a proven track record of producing world class events for audiences of all sizes in a safe, respectful and controlled manner. Planners, producers, designers, technicians and all manner of event employees are accustomed to working within stringent workplace protocols and guidelines.
6. Companies planning and servicing meetings & events are made up of creative, detailed and logistically-minded organizations and professionals, inherently committed to:
  - delivering professional levels of creative design and logistical expertise;
  - helping protect the wellbeing of attendees and staff; and
  - communicating effectively with staff, partners and attendees.

# A PHASED APPROACH

Anticipating that our industry's capabilities are recognized and trusted by health authorities, we are hopeful that the restart (which has slowly begun under existing restrictions in BC) will expand under a safe and effective phased approach. This approach will gradually allow for an increased number of attendees permitted, an evolution of the types of meetings & events which can take place, and the activities planned during these events. By restarting responsibly, our industry will build client/attendee confidence in British Columbia as a safe place to meet and allow the industry to begin recovery.

To mirror BC's Restart Plan, our industry is encouraged to follow the same phased marketing recovery approach adopted by Destination British Columbia and Destination Canada illustrated below.

## PHASED MARKETING APPROACH & ATTENDEE ORIGIN:



It is important to emphasize that a phased approach does not only apply to geographic scope or number of attendees but also includes the nature of activities permitted within each event and the types of events themselves. For example, an educational symposium comprised of a lecture series presents less risk than interactive workshops or sessions, and a conference or conventional trade show with numerous introductions, one-on-one or small group meetings and physical contacts would be considered higher risk still.

The early phases as proposed will not include higher-risk convention-type of activities but instead focus on smaller meetings, lower levels of interaction and high space:attendee ratios. Corporate meetings and events can effectively be designed to meet the requirements of this phased approach.

By adopting COVID-19 best practices, our industry will stand ready for a gradual, compliant, closely monitored restart for business meetings & events in the hopes of seeing an easing of restrictions as a result. In support of a phased restart, the following guidelines should be incorporated into existing event planning strategies, such as Emergency Response, Design and Logistics Plans.

### Sources:

*Destination Canada Phased Approach to Recovery* – [https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1024-COVID-19%20Recovery%20Signals%20Framework%20Destination%20Canada%20COVID-19%20Recovery%20Signals%20Framework\\_April%2021%202020\\_EN.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1024-COVID-19%20Recovery%20Signals%20Framework%20Destination%20Canada%20COVID-19%20Recovery%20Signals%20Framework_April%2021%202020_EN.pdf)  
*Road to Resilience* – <https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/06/Industry-update-DBC-site-Marketing-June-24.pdf>

# SUMMARY

The BC Meetings & Events Industry is driven by strategic planning and responsible safety & risk management. Incorporating these COVID-19 guidelines into your planning activities should be a natural adaptation for the business meetings & events industry because it will be a continuation of our industry's long-standing commitments to these three goals. The industry, and the many downstream economic sectors that it supports, have a proven track record on which to build.

With your support and implementation of these guidelines, the BC Meetings & Events Industry stands ready for a safe restart to get our businesses operating again, to create employment for our workers and to support the recovery of our Tourism and Hospitality Industry in BC.



Source: BC's Restart Plan: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/phase-3>

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# BC MEETINGS & EVENTS INDUSTRY COVID-19 SAFE RESTART GUIDELINES

## Disclaimer:

These guidelines are written as best practice recommendations for companies operating in this sector that are safely planning, implementing and servicing meetings & events during and post COVID-19. The guidelines reference requirements and restrictions dictated by the Province of British Columbia, PHO, local health authorities within BC and WorkSafeBC.

These guidelines have not been officially approved by any health organizations, though they have been reviewed by WorkSafeBC, the BC Ministry of Health and the BCCDC, and edited according to their recommendations. Regulations in place by these bodies will supersede any information contained in this document. These guidelines should be used to direct the development of, not to replace, your event safety plans and/or risk mitigation plans. Public health information will continue to evolve as more is learned about this virus and the risk of transmission, and it is important for planners to stay on top of information as it becomes available to the public.

It is also recommended that you ensure your event insurance and contracts are updated to incorporate COVID-19 liabilities.

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# RISK ASSESSMENT

*Background premise: event planners and vendors must take all necessary precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission and illness to themselves, workers, and others at the workplace. They must have proof of workplace/office policies for day-to-day functionality which reflect guidance primarily from WorkSafeBC, in accordance with the PHO and BCCDC. All such plans should meet minimum WorkSafeBC standards as a preliminary phase of a Risk Mitigation and Response Plan development.*

Before holding a meeting or event during the COVID-19 pandemic, a COVID-19 Risk Assessment should be conducted by all parties involved in the planning and execution of the event to determine the inherent level of risk, and areas where the risk of transmission can be reduced including setup, execution and load-out of the event.

This assessment should be documented and added to Risk Mitigation Plans. Both the written Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plans should be made available upon request.

Resources for Risk Assessment Tools:

- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-333185>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mass-gathering-risk-assessment-covid-19-key-considerations>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/decision-tree-for-risk-assessment-for-mass-gathering>
- <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>



# COVID-19 RISK MITIGATION & RESPONSE PLAN

Standard planning practice for meetings & events includes the development of an **Event Emergency Response Plan (ERP)** which outlines protocols and communication trees in the event of an unforeseen emergency circumstance. Planners will evolve ERPs to integrate COVID-19 public health guidelines through the development of a **COVID-19 Risk Mitigation and Response Plan**. This plan needs to take into consideration, at a minimum, the following recommendations along with any risk mitigation plan(s) vendors, venues and the client may have in place:

1. Designate a COVID-19 Safety Manager responsible for all COVID-19 related issues on-site. Establish clear communication procedures with a line of command and control for COVID-19 related inquiries and issues.
2. Establish a thorough guest-facing communications plan including: pre-event symptom screening, health declarations/reminders, and support for guests who are symptomatic and unable to attend in person (through digital solutions).
3. Clearly display signage at event entry points encouraging attendees to self-assess for COVID-19 symptoms before entering, and behave appropriately if symptoms are present (e.g. do not enter and seek medical care).
4. Event staff have a duty to report if they are feeling unwell, and to protect the health and well-being of all by going home and staying at home as appropriate. Consider including adherence to WorkSafeBC policies in vendor and staff contracts, specifically around monitoring of symptoms and self-isolation requirements. WorkSafeBC policies should be posted in the venue (back of house), and all staff should be familiar with the associated expectations. The COVID-19 Safety Manager should be prepared to send staff home if displaying symptoms.
5. Provide guidelines for how to react if an attendee exhibits symptoms on-site. Recommendations are:
  - Anyone displaying symptoms should be asked to wear a mask until they can be isolated and assessed;
  - Assessment should ideally be conducted in a designated COVID-19 isolation area;
  - Refer to the BC-COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (<https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>) and/or call 8-1-1 to assess symptoms;
  - The COVID-19 Safety Manager should be alerted if anyone displays or reports symptoms; and
  - This information must be documented and shared with local public health authorities.
6. Ensure contact tracing is possible through proper record-keeping (e.g. a complete list of all guests and staff on site along with room and/or seating assignments, if applicable, is kept by planner or client). Records must be maintained for at least 30 days following the event.
7. Comply with safe hygiene, physical distancing and mask requirements, and implement protocols that align with PHO and local health authorities.
8. Communicate health, safety and hygiene etiquette to attendees, staff and vendors, including:
  - Practicing diligent hand hygiene;
  - Practicing cough etiquette;
  - Maintaining the current recommended physical distance from others;
  - Wearing masks when unable to safely distance; and
  - Refraining from touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.



# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

## Attendee Pre-Event Registration & Communication

Pre-event communication is critical in mitigating risk at meetings & events. Communicating as much information using on-line technology (e.g. registration and event apps) in advance will reduce the need for personal touch and contact points on-site. Recommended communications pre-event include:

1. Convey up-to-date public health information before the event, advising that anyone experiencing signs of illness should not travel or attend.
2. Require a signed Personal Information and Consent Form stating the attendee:
  - has read and agrees to comply with posted event health and safety rules; and
  - agrees to provide and allow organizers to use personal information for contact tracing .
3. Require a signed COVID-19 Health Declaration confirming the attendee meets the COVID-19 health requirements as per the PHO and local health authorities as follows:
  - the attendee is, and will be when they arrive on-site, in good health and exhibiting no COVID-19 symptoms;
  - the attendee has not travelled outside of the PHO recommended quarantine-free zone in the past 14 days; and
  - to their knowledge the attendee has not been directed to self-isolate by public health.

## Staff Pre-Event Communication

Develop relevant training materials for staff including briefings on WorkSafeBC and event-specific policies and procedures. Scheduling and securing staff availability for safety meetings should be part of a pre-event plan, along with designating time for safety meetings (a minimum of once before the event begins as well as daily safety briefings when new staff or crew arrive on site is recommended).





## At the Event

As with pre-event communication, on-site communication also must include COVID-19 health and safety protocols. All visual communication may be supplemented audibly and through touchless event app technology. Consider the following implementations:

1. Remind attendees of their pre-signed the health declaration and reconfirm health screening answers before entering the meeting/event premises.
2. Event staff, vendors and volunteers should be made aware of WorkSafe BC's COVID-19 illness protocols and should complete a daily health declaration form (preferably online). Signed forms to be kept by the COVID-19 Safety Manager or event professional on site designated to monitor health and safety related matters.
3. Event staff, vendors and volunteers should be briefed on safety protocols and procedures as often as necessary (e.g. daily if new staff or crew report on site each day).
4. Encourage attendees, vendors, staff and volunteers to report any COVID-19 symptoms in a way that makes them feel safe and comfortable to do so.
5. Provide clear protocols of who to inform if symptoms are experienced or observed on-site. Any attendee, staff, vendor or volunteer who starts to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 while on-site should know how to alert a member of the event team, and where the COVID-19 isolation area is located.
6. On-site signage and communication should recommend frequent handwashing, cough etiquette and physical distancing.
7. Communicate hand hygiene practices, cough etiquette and physical distancing measures in high traffic areas such as the main entrance to the venue, the registration area, food & beverage areas and on main stage screens.
8. Post handwashing directions in restrooms and by handwashing and hand sanitizer stations. Have many stations available and ensure they are kept stocked.
9. If relevant, display signage to indicate how to properly wear and dispose of face masks.
10. Signage and/or floor decals should be in place dictating the flow of attendees as well as marking appropriate physical distances, as determined by the PHO and local health authorities.
11. Enhance health and safety messaging by ensuring staff always model good behaviour and follow COVID-19 mitigation recommendations.



## Post-Event Communication

Post-event communications may include the following:

1. Post-event communication advising everyone who was on-site to contact event organizers if they display any COVID-19 symptoms within 10-14 days of leaving the event.
2. Messaging to alert the event organizers should attendees develop symptoms within 14 days of the event.
3. A request for feedback on COVID-19 health and safety measures implemented.
4. A follow-up email after 14 days to alert all attendees that no cases of COVID-19 have been reported.





# EVENT PLANNING & DESIGN

Considering air quality and ventilation when selecting a venue is an important first step in event planning & design. Poor ventilation can lead to higher risk of transmission, and therefore the venue's HVAC system and ability to supply meeting spaces with fresh air should be part of a Risk Mitigation and Response Plan.

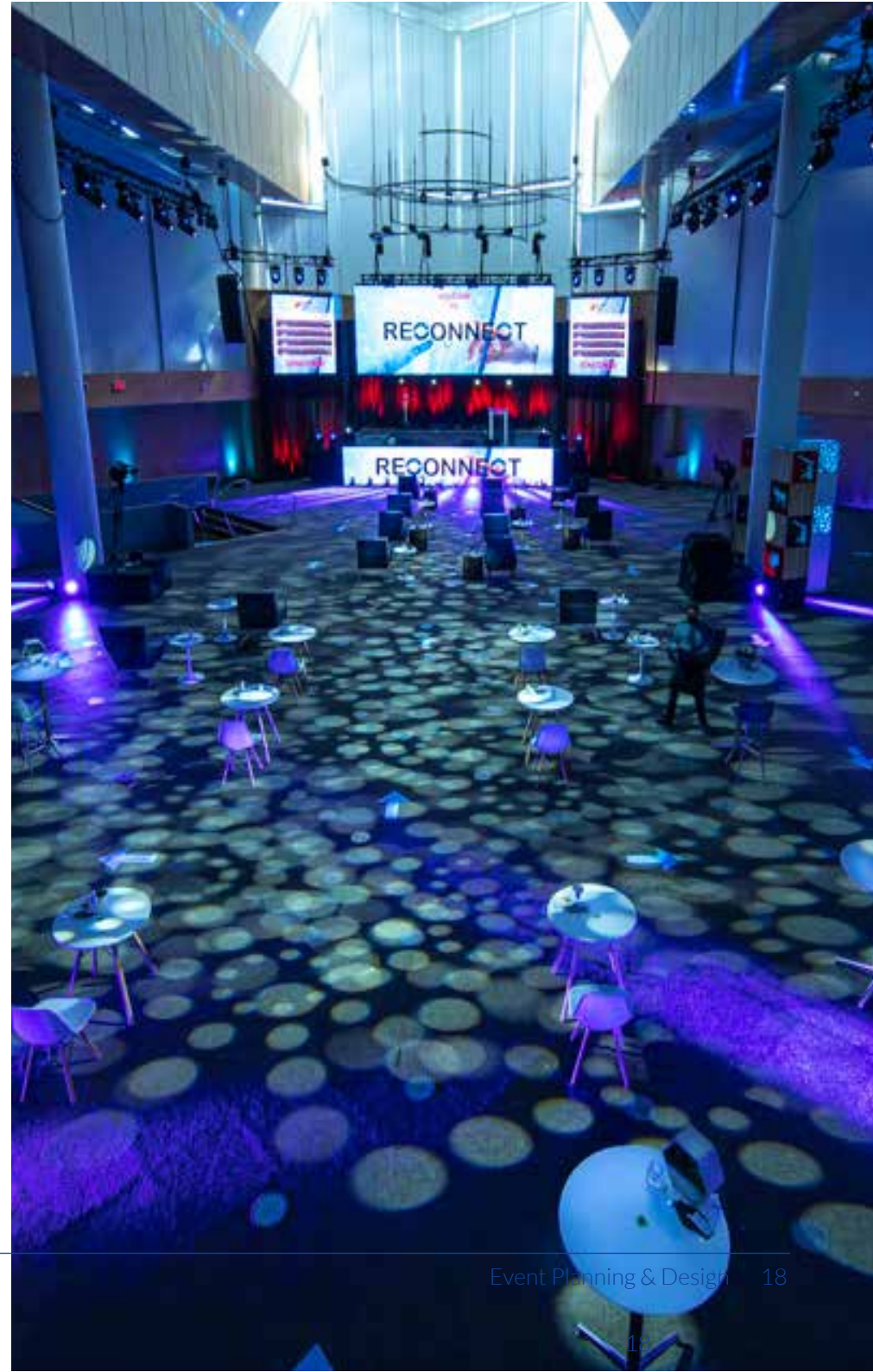
Every participant in your meeting or event, whether a planner, supplier, vendor, venue manager, volunteer, or attendee, must keep physical distancing, cough etiquette, hand hygiene, and cleanliness of common spaces as a number one priority.

Event managers, venue managers, and vendors should have the necessary protocols in place to address the following requirements:

## Venue Guidelines and Protocols

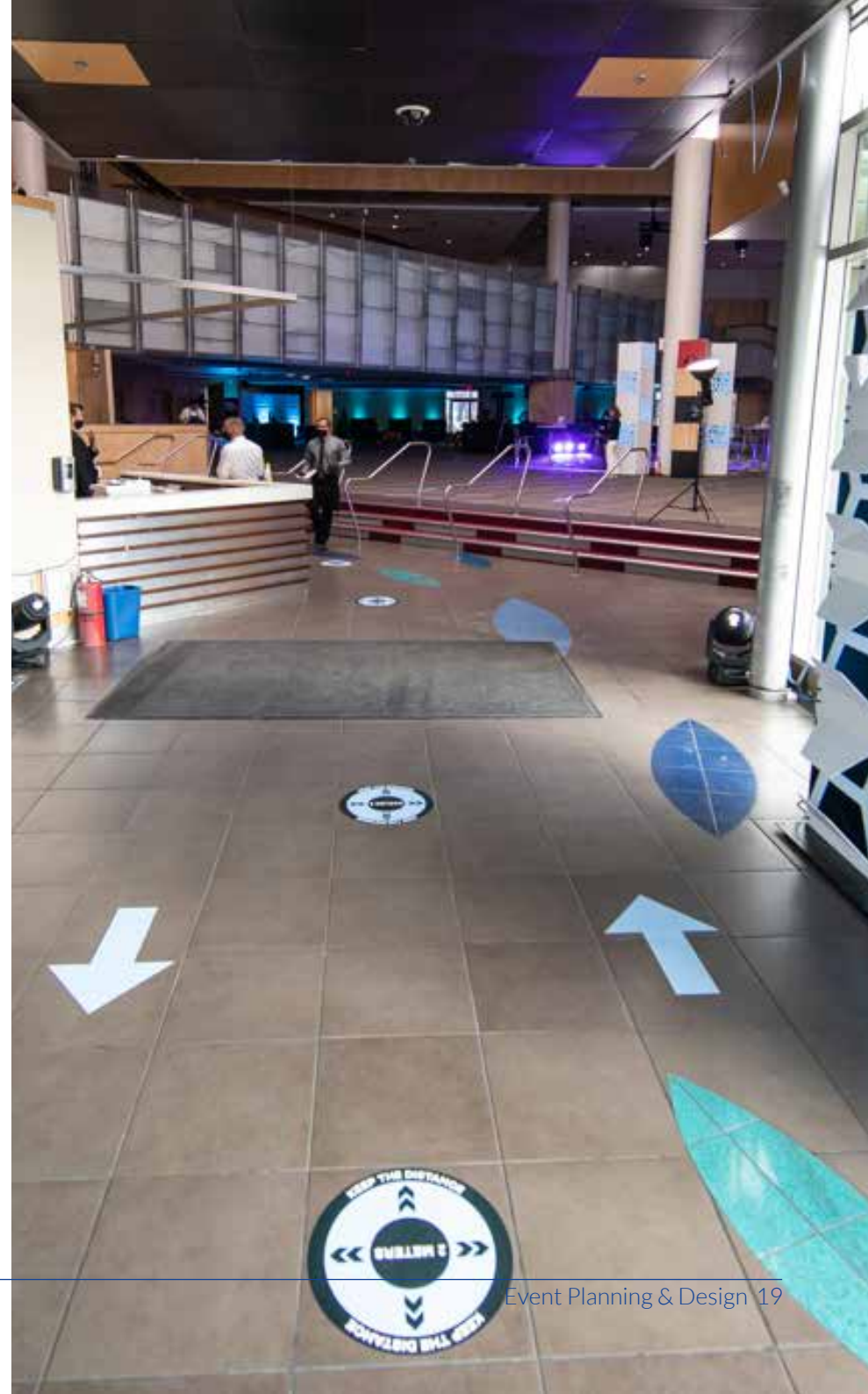
The venue's COVID-19 guidelines and protocols should be made available to and adhered to by all organizers, staff, vendors and volunteers. They should be updated regularly to include the latest PHO and local health authorities' orders and recommendations, and WorkSafeBC requirements. For example:

1. Capacity restrictions should be updated and monitored to comply with requirements per health authorities, and should be closely monitored.
2. Timing of events must comply with new requirements per health authorities and the specific venue.
3. Review access control requirements at each specific venue, e.g. some venues require check-ins with health & safety ambassadors to gain access, etc.
4. Review any overall plans venues have in place for how to manage attendee traffic flow once in the venue, particularly regarding potential points of congestion.
5. Standard guidelines for room set ups should comply with physical distancing requirements (currently 2 meters between guests for seated functions).



## Physical Distancing and Directed Flow of People

1. Revise capacities by appropriate percentages to ensure physical distancing requirements can be met.
2. Design elements such as seating should encourage/enforce physical distancing throughout the event. (e.g. number of chairs per table, placement of tables at receptions, seating plans with assigned seating recommended).
3. Effective guest flow management should be considered, using app technology, signage and/or screens to facilitate physical distancing and to control access to/from the venue, meeting areas and via elevators and stairways to minimize congestion.
4. Utilize touchless registration and venue/meeting room access control, e.g. digital badge/self-scanning technology, to minimize contact and congestion at meeting room entry points.
5. Ensure appropriate design, floor markings and signage to control flows at queues, entryways, exits, food & beverage areas, meeting and seated spaces, restrooms, exhibit halls, back of house, loading bays, onstage and backstage, etc.
6. Create designated and separate access and egress into event space with clear signage and directional markings for one-way attendee, staff and vendor flow whenever possible.
7. Stagger attendee arrival times to regulate the flow and density of attendees entering, attending, and departing the event when possible.
8. Stagger vendor and delivery, load-in and load-out schedules to allow for fewer people in the same location at the same time.
9. Clearly post and monitor venue, meeting room(s)/space(s), restrooms and elevator protocols and limits.
10. Provide physical barriers at information and registration kiosks and between stage performers and audience if required distancing cannot be achieved.
11. Recommend use of masks for attendees, staff and vendors especially when distancing requirements cannot be met. It is likely that some events will choose to make masks a mandatory requirement for all attendees and staff.
12. Monitor restrictions around use of dance floors specific to private events.





## When Physical Distance Cannot Be Maintained

When unable to comply with physical distancing requirements, or if physical distancing may not be guaranteed, the following recommendations are advised:

1. Install protective barriers where a high degree of personal interaction is anticipated and distancing requirements cannot be met (e.g. plexi-glass guards at registration areas, information desks etc.)
2. Wear masks and visors. Non-medical masks are recommended for both staff and attendees whenever physical distancing is not possible and both masks and visors are recommended for staff in high traffic areas.
3. Follow PHO and local health authorities' recommendations for the purchasing, wearing, and disposing of non-medical face masks.

### IMPORTANT NOTE:

The use of masks is an additional measure and not a substitute for other more effective measures (e.g. optimizing physical distancing, exclusion of symptomatic participants and staff).

### Resource:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>



# HYGIENE & CLEANING

*Background premise: the primary route of COVID-19 transmission is close personal contact with someone carrying the virus. Reducing crowding, increasing physical distance, and ensuring good ventilation are the primary mechanisms for reducing transmission risk. Surfaces may be a secondary mode of transmission, but they likely play small role compared with personal contact. Hand hygiene and regular cleaning/disinfection are important, but not nearly as important as bigger spaces and fewer faces.*

## Promoting Safe Hygiene

All venues, planners, staff, vendors, volunteers and attendees should have and/or sign a health declaration with up-to-date COVID-19 health screening questions as per the PHO and local health authorities.

Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand sanitizing and washing by communicating protocols, installing signage and creating a low-touch environment.

## Handwashing

Facilitate regular handwashing and sanitation for staff and attendees:

1. Provide hand sanitizers and/or handwash stations in all occupied spaces, entry and exit points and near restrooms.
2. Prioritize touchless hygiene technology, such as automatic faucets, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers.
3. Communicate handwashing station locations and proper handwashing protocols.

## Creating a Low-Touch Environment

### Primary Considerations:

1. Leave doors to meeting spaces and washrooms open to reduce touch points, as long as permitted by fire code regulations.
2. Promote digital vs. physical, e.g. contactless technology for registration, menus, agendas, floor plans, tickets, etc.
3. Prevent the use of manually operated drinking fountains or water dispensers.

### Secondary Considerations: low risk of transmission

- Consider removing communal items from the center of the table, such as glassware, water jugs, candy, pens, and notepads. Ensure water is provided in a responsible manner, e.g. bottled water at the back of the room.
- Choose to have linens changed regularly regularly or avoid using linens altogether.
- Consider digital badges and use of event apps for information and communications. Though touching/distributing the materials themselves don't present a high risk for virus transmission, this could be particularly helpful to avoid or reduce congestion at registration and support tables.
- Consider not providing a formal coat check area, or creating a way to physically distance attendees who may line up to access for this service.





## Cleaning & Sanitation

Cleaning and sanitation protocols implemented at meetings & events should abide by the provincial and local health authority guidelines. Protocols should address the following:

### Person(s) and Party Responsible (ie. venue, planner, caterer, etc.)

1. Determine who is responsible for the cleaning and sanitation of each area / item.
2. Determine who is responsible for the disposal of waste.
3. Determine who is providing the sanitation materials / supplies.

### Method and Frequency

1. Use cleaning products and methods that adhere to the regulations determined by the PHO and are listed on the BC Centre for Disease Control.  
**Source:** <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>
2. All spaces should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized, and waste should be removed before and after each event.
3. Each room should be sanitized daily.
4. High-touch areas should be disinfected regularly, twice per day is recommended.
5. Consider sanitizing audiovisual equipment, head tables, and lecterns between presenters. Although unlikely to affect transmission risk, this may make presenters more comfortable.
6. Avoid sharing headphones, microphones and radios; all must be sanitized before and after each use.
7. Any staff tasked with cleaning high-touch areas should wear a mask and/or visor as well as gloves if indicated on the product label.

### Focus on High-Touch Areas

It is important to focus cleaning efforts on high-touch areas both indoors and outdoors, and areas which will likely be accessed by many people including restrooms, stair or hand rails, and lifts/elevators.

### Restroom Sanitation

1. Ensure that restrooms are monitored for hygiene, and that scheduled cleaning (thoroughness and frequency) is adequate for COVID-19.
2. Consider providing paper towels for attendee use over hand towels or forced air dryers.
3. Remind attendees about best practices for hygiene in restrooms via prominent signage.

### Waste Disposal

Increased waste is one side-effect of COVID-19. Protocols should take into account a larger than usual volume of waste, the need to remove it more frequently, and proper disposal methods to remove waste from the venue.



# FOOD & BEVERAGE

Event planners in charge of food & beverage, and food & beverage vendors should have the necessary protocols in place to address the following requirements and ensure alignment with PHO recommendations at all times:

1. Self-serve buffets should be avoided. Serviced, plated or individual boxed meals should be considered over open food.
2. Food and beverages may be placed on the table or counter rather than handing items directly to attendees.
3. Tables and chairs should be set up to allow for required physical distancing. Directional arrows for managing the movement of guests through areas of potential congestion is also recommended.
4. If the event is held at a non-hotel venue, it is recommended that the caterer's protocols and procedures align with the BC Restaurant and Food Services Association Blueprint for Reopening In-Restaurant Dining. **Resource:** [www.bcrfa.com/bcrfa-blueprint-for-reopening](http://www.bcrfa.com/bcrfa-blueprint-for-reopening)
5. If the event is held at a hotel, the hotel's protocols and procedures for food service should align with PHO, BCCDC and BC Hotel Association guidelines.
6. Menus can be posted electronically, on the event app or printed on single-use paper.
7. Non-touch water and beverage stations should be provided. Similarly (and if applicable), contact-free payment technologies should be used.
8. If not in a hotel, adhere to PHO orders for any timing restrictions on food & beverage services.

## Resources:

### Provincial Health Order for Gatherings and Events

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-gatherings-events.pdf>

### Provincial Health Order for Restaurants Pubs, Bars and Nightclubs

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>



# TRANSPORTATION

Event planners in charge of transportation and transportation providers should have the necessary protocols in place to address the following requirements:

1. Vehicles should allow for appropriate physical distancing of passengers. This may require providing additional vehicles or allowing for multiple trips.
2. Regular sanitation of vehicles should take place daily, at minimum.
3. Masks are recommended as added mitigation and protection for on-board guests, but are not a substitute for necessary distancing.
4. If possible, reminding guests to use hand sanitizer prior to boarding vehicles is also recommended.

**Resource: WorkSafeBC Transportation Information:**

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-industry-information/transportation>



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# APPENDICES

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# APPENDIX A - Workplace Posters

BC Government's Hand Hygiene instructions:  
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/hand-washing>



## Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



### Hand Hygiene

**SOAP OR ALCOHOL-BASED HAND RUB: Which is best?**



**Remove hand and wrist jewellery**

**Either will clean your hands: use soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.**

#### HOW TO HAND WASH

- 

1  
Wet hands with warm (not hot or cold) running water
- 

2  
Apply liquid or foam soap
- 

3  
Lather soap covering all surfaces of hands for 20-30 seconds
- 

4  
Rinse thoroughly under running water
- 

5  
Pat hands dry thoroughly with paper towel
- 

6  
Use paper towel to turn off the tap

#### HOW TO USE HAND RUB

- 

1  
Ensure hands are visibly clean (if soiled, follow hand washing steps)
- 

2  
Apply about a loonie-sized amount to your hands
- 

3  
Rub all surfaces of your hand and wrist until completely dry (15-20 seconds)



Ministry of Health  
BC Centre for Disease Control

**If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.**



COVID19\_HI\_001

BC Government's Mask instructions:  
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>

## Coronavirus COVID-19




### Face Masks: how are they different?

Physical distancing, hand washing and staying at home if you are sick are the most effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19; masks do not replace these actions. Masks, face coverings and gloves are the least protective measures for reducing transmission of COVID-19. Masks, when worn properly and for short periods, may offer some protection especially when you are not able to keep a 2 metre distance from others. For work settings, refer to specific workplace guidance on masks.

#### Cloth masks (homemade or bought)

- May be used by the general public to reduce the spread of large respiratory droplets. However, these masks offer minimal protection to the wearer.
- Can be made from various types of machine-washable and dryable cloth.
- If homemade, use clean woven cotton or linen e.g., a tea towel, bedsheet, pillowcase, t-shirt.
- Must be designed and worn to fully cover nose and mouth.
- Should fit snugly, let you breathe easily, and attached securely with ties or ear loops.
- Re-usable and need to be washed regularly.

#### Other cloth face coverings

- E.g., bandana, niqab, scarf, neck gaiter.
- May be used to reduce the spread of large respiratory droplets. However, face coverings offer limited protection to the wearer.
- If the material is thin, fold it into several layers.
- Be sure that it covers mouth, nose and sides of the face.

#### Industrial N95 respirators

- Used to protect workers from inhaling dust, fumes, and hazardous aerosols.
- Available in hardware stores.
- These masks are not recommended to prevent COVID-19 because if they have a valve and you cough/sneeze, you may spread a stream of germs through the valve.

#### Medical/surgical masks

- Used by healthcare workers or those caring for sick people. Not for general use, in order to reserve critical supply for healthcare.
- Protect against large droplets.
- Flat/pleated or cup shaped with a looser fit.
- Water resistant; and may come with visor.
- Meant for one-time use.

#### Medical N95 respirators

- Used by healthcare workers in healthcare settings. Not for use by the general public.
- Protect against inhaling and exhaling very small airborne particles and aerosols.
- Fits closely over the nose and mouth to form a tight seal.
- Must be custom fit and worn properly.

Learn more at [www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks)

May 26, 2020

# APPENDIX B – Health Resources and Contact Information

Below are links to organizations that are authorities on the pandemic or the recommended workplace practices that can help combat the virus. They are provided here so you can reference and contact them directly if needed.

## **The Province of BC:**

<http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan-the-Provinces-restart-plan>

[https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en - COVID-19 self assessment tool](https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en-COVID-19-self-assessment-tool)

## **Worksafe BC:**

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>

## **WHO:**

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-332235>

## **WHO Risk Assessment:**

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mass-gathering-risk-assessment-covid-19-key-considerations>

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-333185>

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/decision-tree-for-risk-assessment-for-mass-gathering>

## **BC Public Health Authorities:**

### **Fraser Health Authority**

Phone: (604) 870-7903

Email: [HPLand@fraserhealth.ca](mailto:HPLand@fraserhealth.ca)

### **Interior Health Authority**

Phone: (250) 851-7305

Email: [workcamps@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:workcamps@interiorhealth.ca)

### **Island Health Authority**

Phone: (250) 519-3401

Fax: (250) 519-3402

Email: [gatewayoffice@viha.ca](mailto:gatewayoffice@viha.ca)

### **Northern Health - Communicable**

**Disease Hub** Phone (during business hours): 1-855-565- 2990 On-call

Medical Health Officer

after hours phone: 1-250-565-2000, press 7 and ask for the Medical Health Officer on call

### **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**

Phone: (604) 675-3800

Manager on call Fax: (604) 736-8651

Email: [EHVC@vch.ca](mailto:EHVC@vch.ca)

# APPENDIX C – References

## (Online & Print)

**Alberta's Event Industry:** Relaunch Plan Covid-19

**BC Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health:** COVID-19 Guidance to the Hotel Sector, Provincial Coronavirus Response, Updates: May 11, 2020  
<http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

**BC Event Management:** Reconnect 2020 Event Photos and Imagery

**BC Hotel Association:** Tourism & Hospitality Best Practices Guidelines, Accommodations DRAFT

**BC Provincial Health Officer:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

**BC Provincial Health Order (Events/Gatherings):**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-gatherings-events.pdf>

**BC Restaurant and Food Services Association:** Blueprint for Reopening In-Restaurant Dining, Industry Panel and Report and Recommendations

**BMO Centre – Calgary Stampede, Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, Edmonton Expo Centre, Edmonton Convention Centre:** Alberta's Event Industry, Relaunch Plan COVID-19 **BrandLive:** COVID-19 Best Practices for Meetings and Conventions DRAFT

**Canadian Association of Exposition Management (CAEM):** Canadian Exhibition Industry Safe Reopening Guidelines

**Destination Canada:** <https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/coronavirus-updates>

**Events Industry Council:** <https://www.eventscouncil.org/>

**Event Safety Alliance:** The Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide, For Event Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Go2HR:** [www.go2hr.ca/covid-19-updates](http://www.go2hr.ca/covid-19-updates) & [www.go2hr.ca/health-safety](http://www.go2hr.ca/health-safety)

**International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC), the International Congress and Conventions Association (ICCA) and the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI):** Good Practice Guidance, Addressing COVID-19 Requirements for Re-Opening Business Events

**Local Health Authority - Vancouver Coastal Health:** <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19>

**LoungeWorks:** Social Distance in Meeting Spaces

**Meetings Industry Association:** Roadmap to Reopening and Operating Safely Version 1

**Meetings Mean Business:** Adapting to New Expectations for Conferences, Conventions, Trade Shows & Exhibits

<https://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.ca/>

**MPI:** <https://www.mpi.mb.ca/Pages/covid-19-information.aspx>

**PavCo, Vancouver Convention Centre:** Safe Business Resumption Plan, Working Draft as of May 14, 2020

**PCMA:** <https://www.pcma.org/coronavirus-business-events-professionals-need-to-know-faq/>

**TIABC/Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Industry Response and Recovery Task Force:** Letter to the Minister of Tourism, Arts & Culture, and the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development & Competitiveness, RE: Meetings, Conferences & Events Sector

**TIAC:** [https://tiac-aitc.ca/\\_Library/Travel\\_Economy\\_Series\\_/MEETINGS\\_-\\_TIAC\\_Travel\\_Economy\\_Series\\_EN.pdf](https://tiac-aitc.ca/_Library/Travel_Economy_Series_/MEETINGS_-_TIAC_Travel_Economy_Series_EN.pdf)

**WorkSafeBC:** <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates>

**World Health Organization (WHO):** Key Planning Recommendations for Mass Gatherings in the Context of COVID-10, Interim Guidance, 29 May 2020  
Mass Gathering Risk Assessment COVID-19, Key Considerations & Decision Making Tree

**World Travel & Tourism Council:** Leading Global Protocols for the New Normal, Convention Centres, Meetings & Events, May 2020

# APPENDIX D – Contributors

The following individuals provided their industry knowledge and expertise to the creation of the guidelines in this document:

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