



COVID-19 Services Recovery Roadmap

*A Guide for Event Service
Professionals*

v. July 2020

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COVID-19 Services Recovery Roadmap

Version: July 2020

The purpose of this Roadmap is to help service professionals navigate changes to convention services for successful post-COVID recovery. This is a collective effort by peer event service professionals to identify a list of new and changing services for CVBs, Hotels, and Convention Centers to consider. This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of service changes needed across all destinations or venues, nor is it intended to be perceived as best practices or guidelines. The intent is to spark new ideas to help you be a valuable partner to planners as we plan for a return to face to face meetings.

Event service professionals are resourceful and highly skilled problem solvers with a broad and detailed knowledge of their destination and venue/hotel. Their expertise and perspective will help bridge the gap as questions and challenges arise with post-COVID events. Consult with your convention or event services manager for more detailed solutions and strategies.

Please always be sure to consult CDC, local and venue-specific guidelines and requirements for all services that impact visitor safety. Additionally, you can refer to the COVID Industry Resources page on the ESPA web site for helpful links to documents such as the [Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide](#), the [US Travel Association Travel in the New Normal Guide](#), and others.

There are separate sections for CVBs and Venues. As the situation evolves, this document will be updated and expanded. If you have additional service ideas or considerations to be added to the Roadmap, please email info@espaonline.org.

CVB & DMO Services Considerations

- **Communication**
 - Document and communicate local safety practices – following the customer’s journey starting at arrival in your destination.
 - Stay informed on your State and City’s guidelines and checklists.
 - Document and communicate local COVID situation updates for groups.
 - Keep local transportation protocols and post-COVID efforts (airport/trains/shared ride/shuttles).
- **Registration services** – consider changes needed for safety protocols:
 - Stagger Queueing / Assign times to arrive.
 - Eliminate or Minimize on-site presence (i.e. traditional staffed destination tables).
 - Scanners upon check-in to account for attendance in sessions*
 - Reduce bag stuffing services onsite.
 - Eliminate mass individual “swag” offerings.
 - Consider offering pre-stuffed bags rather than individual items.
- **Provide proactive support to groups on rescheduling.**
 - Negotiations with Partners
 - Navigating communications with Partners (venues, DMCs)
 - Working with multiple groups to help reduce crowding of dates
- **Expanded digital offerings** (virtual site visits, virtual destination experiences, etc.)
 - Work with a local A/V partner to produce virtual site visits.
 - Look to software that you already use - i.e. Threshold 360.
- **Hybrid / Virtual Meetings**
 - Offer a virtual destination experience / gamification for breaks.
 - Consider sponsorship - logo placement / promotional video.
 - Host the virtual happy hour & incentivize attendance (authentic destination product).
- **Physical Meetings**
 - Offer Unique Networking Ideas (outdoor/walkable opportunities, scavenger hunts, driving itinerary).
 - Support local partners and promote direct spending (raffles, coupon, incentives).
 - Consider chat box integration on websites and/or mobile phone numbers where attendees can ask questions about the destination and have a CVB rep answer them.

CVB & DMO Services Considerations (continued)

- **Destination Info Table Alternatives**
 - Virtually engage with visitors with a CVB representative.
 - Engage attendees via the Convention App - check in/out, push notifications, getting registration for an event for online virtual presence with the group. Work with planner to register and set up an account on the event app to communicate/promote destination resources - link back to website (i.e. dining info, attractions etc).
 - Gamification - add in scavenger hunts, trivia, networking
 - Social Media - curate posts, interact with group page(s)
 - Mapping feature - facility
 - Vendor Referrals for online/app services
- **Expanded Attendance Building**
 - Similar to Sports - find local companies who might be prospective attendees.
 - Allocate resources to marketing ads (LinkedIn InMail / Facebook).
 - Sponsor a part of the meeting in some fashion (meal / virtual / breakout).
 - Host the virtual happy hour & incentivize attendance (authentic destination product).
 - Create custom videos produced by in house marketing teams.
 - Consider virtual attendance builder options - zoom backgrounds for pre event webinars, digital postcards, social media support, etc.
 - Provide local support letters for planners to share with attendees.
 - Promote local initiatives for safe meetings and clean spaces.
- **Sponsorship**
 - Identify expanded or new sponsorship opportunities for planners to consider.
 - Assist planners with sponsor asset identification.
 - Assist planners with activation strategies.
 - Review sponsor proposals to identify gaps.
- **Marketing Support**
 - CVBs should consider hosting a landing page for FAQs needed for COVID related guidelines and processes for the city as a whole. A one stop shop for city, hotel, center, venue and restaurant processes. Planners need important and helpful information and resources at their fingertips.
 - Digital Resources (maps, photos, videos, content for newsletters, virtual tours, zoom backgrounds, city fun facts, copy)

CVB & DMO Services Considerations (continued)

- Concise One-Sheets, Dining, Entertainment, COVID-19 Summary/FAQs, Attractions & Current Info/Regulations
- Digital messaging even for those virtual meetings that may have cancelled or gone hybrid
- Create a source sheet or web link highlighting local partners that provide COVID-19 materials or resources that a planner may need; plexiglass shields, masks, sanitizer, etc.
- Meeting planner toolkit (KBYG, discounts, enhanced content, transportation)
- Making sure that our planners receive communications that our DMOs are creating - most of us can tag our clients to opt in or opt out of what our marketing/ comm teams are putting out right now, we should assume that is good information for our clients to have and ensure that they receive them.

Partnerships, Stakeholder & Community Strategy

Partner Relations

- **Stay connected** to partners via virtual lunch/ happy hours to maintain and provide DMO value. Offer virtual opportunities for training.
 - Examples - Frisco Fanatics (FF), Super Service Program (these programs are similar to CTA). How can this be taken virtually? Visit Indy - State of Tourism is hosted virtually.
 - VisitPITTSBURGH hosts virtual town halls with Mayors and County Executive Offices as well as hosting partner Team chats for partners to talk to each other. This also gives VisitPITTSBURGH the opportunity to steer the conversation re: COVID-19.
 - Visit Indy Visitor Experience/Convention Services
 - A Tourism Recovery Task Force with representation from all hospitality/tourism arenas was created to collectively look at how to safely welcome attendees back to the city and the joint messaging to share.
 - Super Service Online training course for all hospitality members in the city is being updated to educate on new protocols and procedures for the city.
 - Staffed Info Desks in the center will have plexiglass dividers and materials will no longer be available for guests to just pick up, but will be distributed from behind the plexiglass.
 - Rochester communicates via Partner Connection and shares:
 - Best practices for facilities and venues
 - Best practices for having an event post-COVID
 - Extended Services (stepping in/assisting with venue services in the absence of a venue CSM)
- **Communicate with partners**
 - Share our client's overall strategies in protecting attendees with our destination partners to reassure them that measures are being taken across the board.
 - Add key information to event resumes or convention alerts.

Partnerships, Stakeholder & Community Strategy (continued)

- **Work with Community Stakeholders**

- Position yourself as a key partner to your stakeholders i.e. your hotels, venues, suppliers by providing information that they can easily find – a go to spot on your website.
- Survey your partners and ask for re-open dates; have that info readily available on your website.
- Planners will continue to ask for local assistance in the form of connection making. This may be DMOs assisting with finding local companies to potentially provide sponsorships and opportunities within key sectors of a destination.
- Promote feel good stories too - these are a good social media opportunity for DMOs to engage with Partners.
- VisitPITTSBURGH's partnership team took the lead working with our local health department and city and county governments to host Town Halls where the hospitality industry can ask questions about what is to come, etc.
- Help venue partners through the change in event blueprint - tables and chairs - 6 ft apart is 144 sq ft per person - it is a much different world now.
- Help partners update their listings in the CRM, continue to offer support with client site visits/walk-thrus, and collaborate on alternative experiences.
- Understand that partners may still be hesitant about visitors coming into the region.

Stakeholder & Community Strategy

- **Provide robust post-event reporting** with heavy emphasis on how groups impact our region and possibly to remind them of the services we provided to them.
- **Be part of your organization's Market Rebound Strategy.** Be proactive and clear about our role as event services professionals in helping our clients navigate holding post-COVID events in our destinations. This will be important as you reintegrate your furloughed staff back into the organization.

Partnerships, Stakeholder & Community Strategy (continued)

- **Engage and activate partners through CSR projects.**
 - Projects can directly assist those hit the hardest by COVID-19.
 - Identify partners in the community and outline the causes that may align with your client's organizational values & mission.
 - Consider efforts to bring a hands-on CSR experience on-site.
 - We can still encourage our planners to GIVE LOCALLY for CSR even if they are VIRTUALLY MEETING.

- **Research and Address Common Themes of Concern**
 - Survey event organizers and identify common threads of concern.
 - Get a pulse of what planners are experiencing as they plan to rebook postponed events and/or book future events.
 - Be proactive with clients.
 - Be sensitive with planning too far ahead.
 - Firm up outstanding items on the client's to-do list.
 - Make yourself available to discuss any changes between now & then.
 - Familiarize yourself with your hotel and venues' cancellation clauses to be able to assist clients navigate the rebooking or cancellation process.
 - Plan ahead and review future bookings. Fall events are now starting to consider postponement and/or cancellation.
 - Assist planners with space reviews as they consider lowering their space footprint at meetings if attendance is lower.
 - Hotel pickup report tracking will be most helpful to planners that do not have the time to regularly keep up with it & will help them manage attrition (if any).

- **Event Design of onsite services will change**
 - Be the go-to resource for your destination.
 - Be aware of duty of care for location and venues, as well as city and state. The DMO is responsible for staff; venue for their staff; and planner for their staff and attendees in terms of PPE resources (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfectant).
 - In lieu of giveaways, provide more digital resources that are in alignment with social distancing efforts.

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations

Note: This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of service changes needed at venues, nor is it intended to be perceived as safety best practices or guidelines. The intent is to spark ideas to help you navigate a return to face to face meetings. Please always be sure to consult CDC, local and venue-specific guidelines and requirements for all services that impact visitor safety. Additionally, you can refer to the COVID Industry Resources page for helpful links to documents such as the [Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide](#), the [US Travel Association Travel in the New Normal Guide](#) and others.

- **Cleaning and safety practices for venues used as healthcare facilities**
 - Up to six-week dismantle due to sanitization protocols and required authorized signoffs by phase/stages
 - Permitting process--returning function/use of facility from healthcare operation to event venue
- **Cleaning and safety practices for venues**
 - Cleaning considerations
 - Re-opening concerns for venues which have been dormant for more than one month; evaluate existing facility equipment and assess if there is a need to upgrade to contactless use (ex. soap dispensers, hand dryers, etc.).
 - Ongoing pre-event through post-event to include but not limited to hand sanitizing stations, restroom cleaning, temperature monitoring stations, etc.
 - Identify high touch points (entrances/exits, escalators/stairs, elevators, etc.); consider dedicated staff to handle these high touch areas.
 - How are different surfaces being dealt with (cloth seats vs. hard tabletops).
 - Determine needed steps/protocols for high touch points and evaluate with labor based on headcount, # of attendees vs. staff.
 - Venue standards for chemicals utilized, protocols and staff training/retraining (use of new chemicals, updated procedures due to expanded cleaning of high touch areas)
 - HVAC concerns around aerosolized particles; consider replacement with antimicrobial filters

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- Consider whole room fogging sanitization or electrostatic cleaning at close of each day.
- Frequency of cleaning based upon show schedule, recommended at mid-day break and close of day
- Safety considerations
 - Establish venue egress points and designate as entrance only / exit only to avoid traversing.
 - Mandated face coverings
 - Temperature screenings mandated at egress points based on state and local authority protocols
 - Social distancing in elevators recommended at 2-4 persons at a time and escalators with a minimum distance of 4 steps/treads between persons. Signage to be posted at top/bottom of escalators and outside/inside of elevators. Use of decals serves these purposes well.
- Establishment of both facility and client staff to ensure compliance of mandated protocols
- Establish PPE protocols for facility staff, client team, vendors and third parties.
- **Food service: establish and communicate new safety practices (ECOLAB Guidelines)**
 - Banquet
 - Four people per banquet round
 - Staffing -- specific tasks assigned to unique individuals to eliminate overlapping of staff in multiple functions such as one person to serve and a different person to remove
 - Concessions
 - No contact credit card transactions / review requirements for technology / venue-based / assumptive attendee-based
 - Cashless transactions
 - Increase in staffing requirements due to elimination of self-service options

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- Buffet
 - Service by attendant; results in increase in staffing requirements due to elimination of self-service options
 - Assess how elimination of self-service options will impact timing, queues, etc.
 - Installation of shields for food stations
 - Condiments, for example, individually wrapped (no open food sources)
- Breaks
 - Increase in staffing requirements due to elimination of self-service options
 - Assess how elimination of self-service options will impact timing, queues, etc.
 - Installation of shields for food stations
 - Condiments, for example, individually wrapped (no open food sources)
 - Staging: assess space requirements to accomplish and the impact to 'traffic flow' in common areas
- Receptions: communication is required to work through social distancing needs and solutions
- Sustainability practices for food service - e.g. compostable disposable items
- Options for staggered meal times to minimize large gatherings
- Menu adaptations--menus may be limited and/or revised due to new protocols for service.
 - Are meal items individually wrapped or boxed?
 - Are meal items limited to cold options only?
- **Set-ups and logistics to accommodate social distancing**
 - Discussions with client must commence early in planning to assess available rooms-to-space ratio changes due to expanded space needs.
 - Classroom sets as an option are easy to manage, clean and wipe down.
 - Consider logistics of set-ups which typically require multiple staff handling.
- **Expanded digital offerings (virtual site visits, hybrid events, etc.)**
- **Flexibility** will be key in working together to ensure best solutions/options while managing budgetary guidelines.

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- **Signage**--key to communication and identification of venue and event protocols
 - To include:
 - Sanitization station locations
 - One-way traffic patterns; traffic flow assistance
 - Recommendations for the day
 - Reminders
 - Protocols such as mandatory face masks
 - Reminders to:
 - Wear face masks
 - Handwashing; do not touch face
 - Maintain social distancing
 - Avoid handshake greetings
 - Minimize congregating
 - Signage placement:
 - Points of egress to/from the venue and inside the venue (exhibit halls, meeting rooms, etc.)
 - Public hallways and all common areas
 - Restrooms
 - F&B areas
 - Back of house (service corridors, loading docks, parking areas, etc.)
- **3rd party service providers - Communication and receiving of protocols**

Items being brought into property to hotels/convention centers. Covering liability for planner and venues. Request protocols from vendors to reassure clients.
- **Event Design**
 - Hybrid Events / Streaming Options
 - Understanding of bandwidth capabilities and service options of venue
 - A/V pricing and capabilities
 - Registration / Box Office
 - Traffic flow--how to move attendees through effectively while maintaining social distancing
 - Consider virtual options to minimize footprint of on-site registration area and physical contact; may involve distribution of badge credentials in advance of event.

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- Sessions
 - Establish overflow protocol to allow for socially distanced seating in General Session and maximize viewing options to allow all to participate.
 - Traffic flow—consider how to move attendees in/out effectively (time management) while maintaining social distancing.
 - Review egress to/from exhibit halls and meeting rooms to manage attendee traffic flow.
 - Consider staggered access times for attendees.

- Exhibit Hall
 - Establish egress points and designate as entrance only / exit only to avoid traversing.
 - Establish one-way aisles to eliminate traversing.
 - If one-way aisles are not an option, increase aisle widths to allow for social distancing while traversing.
 - Utilize space for overflow options; and additional meeting rooms/classrooms.
 - Exhibitors should be advised that giveaways be limited to individually wrapped items; candy bowls would be discouraged.
 - Exhibitor booths could be managed by appointment only to accomplish reasonable foot traffic on the show floor.
 - Consider a virtual presence for the service desk.

- Conference/Meeting
 - Establish egress points and designate as entrance only / exit only to avoid traversing.
 - Double sessions: establish morning and afternoon shifts--dividing attendees--½ attend meetings in the morning and ½ attend the exhibit hall; reverse for afternoon.

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- Move-in/Move-out Process
 - Are additional move-in/move-out days required to effectively manage/schedule decorator/exhibitor load-in/set-up/load-out; a targeted move-in is suggested.
 - Evaluate if shifts can be staggered (24/7) without cost implications due to overtime, short calls, etc.
- Inquire about concurrent events and the impact of said concurrent events to your event.
- Inquire about the Impact of additional staffing to support/manage/enforce social distancing, cleaning and safety protocols.
 - Discuss who is responsible for these costs
- **Transportation**
 - Determine the options for pick-up / drop-off on property (if any) due to new parameters and/or mandated egresses.
 - Assess if increased ride shares are an alternative.
 - Review queuing requirements and loading zone restrictions (if any).
 - Discuss additional staffing requirements to maintain social distancing protocols as well as crowd management.
 - Determine cleaning protocols of transportation vehicles to include wipe down of seating between each circuit.
- **Coat and Luggage check**
 - Coat check is not recommended at this time due to advisement to cough/sneeze into elbow.
 - Bag check is doable with proper safety protocols in place to be determined by venue and/or service provider.
- **Documentation / Liability Awareness**
 - Determine what is vetted for liability—have you made reasonable accommodations
 - Identify best practices
 - Prepare, plan; establish a baseline
 - Maintain proper documentation

Hotel / Convention Center Considerations (continued)

- **Communication**
 - Two-way communication
 - It is important to share protocols between venue, event management, third-party vendors to ensure clear direction for all parties.
 - To be successful we must all comply unilaterally; it must be a collaboration amongst everyone.
 - Flexibility will be key in working together to ensure best solutions/options while managing budgetary guidelines.
 - Consider the need to be sensitive to mental health aspect.