



# IACC

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## IACC CRITICAL PATHWAY TO RE-OPENING MEETING, CONFERENCE & TRAINING SPACES

Guide Available Cost-free to IACC Certified Venues / \$199USD / €199EUR / £150GBP

Publication: July 2020



*IACC Thanks VGS, Platinum Sponsor for this guide and our global task force and volunteers for their contributions.*



This guidance has been developed after engaging with experts running IACC venues globally, sharing return-to-operating strategies. IACC has sought industry expert and supplier opinion in the changes to operational practices for groups of under 200 people attending small conferences, meetings and training.

Sanitation is at the heart of each and every change to venues operations and country by country, procedures differ as they follow regulations as set out by government and health authorities. In this guide IACC will focus on approaches venues can consider, in hosting meetings. Other associations have published excellent detailed guides for lodging and accommodation and restaurant associations on detailed food service guides.

This guide focuses on three critical elements to preparing your venue for the new normal: **Re-designing the meeting attendee experience: page 3 ➡**

**Re-designing the space: page 16 ➡**

**Re-designing the product: page 41 ➡**

The ultimate aim of the guide being to help venues create environments and products that provide trust and confidence that meetings can return in a safe productive way.



Mark Cooper CEO, IACC



The experience felt by the attendee at their first meeting, will have a profound impact on their appetite to attend another live event or meeting.

For venues it is important that alongside the procedures put in place to conform with regulation and health advice, that we apply the full force of hospitality in equal measure.

In this section of the guide, we will be looking through the eyes of a meeting or training course attendee and imagine this is their first return to a face to face event.

## RE-DESIGNING THE MEETING ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE



# RE-DESIGNING THE MEETING ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE



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# 1. PRE-ARRIVAL

## ATTENDEE CHECKS

Providing a safe and comfortable place to meet again is important, but of equal importance is how you go about re-assuring meeting planners and attendees that you have their health and wellbeing at heart. This begins now before you welcome your clients through the door.

Consider how you are going to present all of the measures you have in place. On your website, in documents, via video or a combination of different communications.

Safe Events is one initiative of IACC UK venue Wyboston Lakes Hotel & Conference Centre, where they created a video walkthrough highlighting all of the measures in place to safeguard attendees.

It would be prudent for venues to not to assume that companies staging a

meeting, will conduct precautionary checks with their attendees before the meeting. Most will of course and as we have covered in other areas of the guide, by venues seeking that such measures are in place, will be reassuring to the client in the least and supportive in correcting their own processes if they have not asked that attendees stay away if they show any signs of infection or have come into contact with infected individuals in the last 14 days.

### Individual or Group Waivers:

The implementation and use of COVID-19 related waivers and legal releases varies greatly. IACC recommends a venue should consult with their Legal counsel and local guidelines for advice on requiring pre-arrival or group related waivers. Some employers are issuing waivers to employees, but that may not meet your local statute or legal requirements in every instance.



*Click on the link to watch the video:  
Safe Events - Wyboston Lakes Training & Events*



## 2. ON ARRIVAL

### ENTRY TIMES 🕒

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to manage the arrival and departure time of attendees, in terms of access to buildings or meeting areas, prior to and after the close of meetings. This measure not only helps with people traffic flow in and out of buildings, but also ensures people are not present when their group's designated social space is not ready or in use by another group.

### VALET SERVICES 🚗

In every case of venues re-opening plans being researched, valet services have been suspended until further notice given the hygiene risks. We expect this to be one of the last services opening back up again.

### CAR PARKING 🅑

Whilst the risks to travelling to an event by car are lower than perhaps public transport, it is not immune from preventative measures being put in place.

In some cases where car parking bays are not extra wide, measures have been put in place to park in every other bay. As occupancies remain low for venues this does not have too much of an adverse effect and is again a first sign of reassurance.

For those arriving by car, the car park is the first chance to start to begin providing information for attendees through signage. It is also a first opportunity to site a sanitation station for handwashing.

### ACCOMMODATING BICYCLES 🚲

In some urban locations, the appetite to cycles to meetings is anticipated to rise and venues who can accommodate cycle storage, should consider this service.

*Member Case Study: UK and New York City IACC member etc.venues, are creating cycle parking in their London, Manchester and New York City venues in anticipation of attendees using this method of transport more in the coming months*







## 2. ON-ARRIVAL

### ARRIVAL HEALTH SCREENING +

**Screening Stations:** Venues may consider the siting of a health-screening area **prior** to arrival into the main lobby or reception area. This reduces the risk of already screened attendees mixing with those awaiting screening and reduces the traffic in this area. Some venues have constructed temporary covered structures in which to carry out health screening measures.

When screening is co-located in a lobby/reception area, the venue should provide appropriate distancing measures and carefully control the flow of people for each service/contact point.

*Simon McMahon, General Manager at Wyboston Lakes highlights the need to have clear procedures and obtaining attendee permission in place when incorporating checking or screening of attendees.*



Venue lobby with health screening

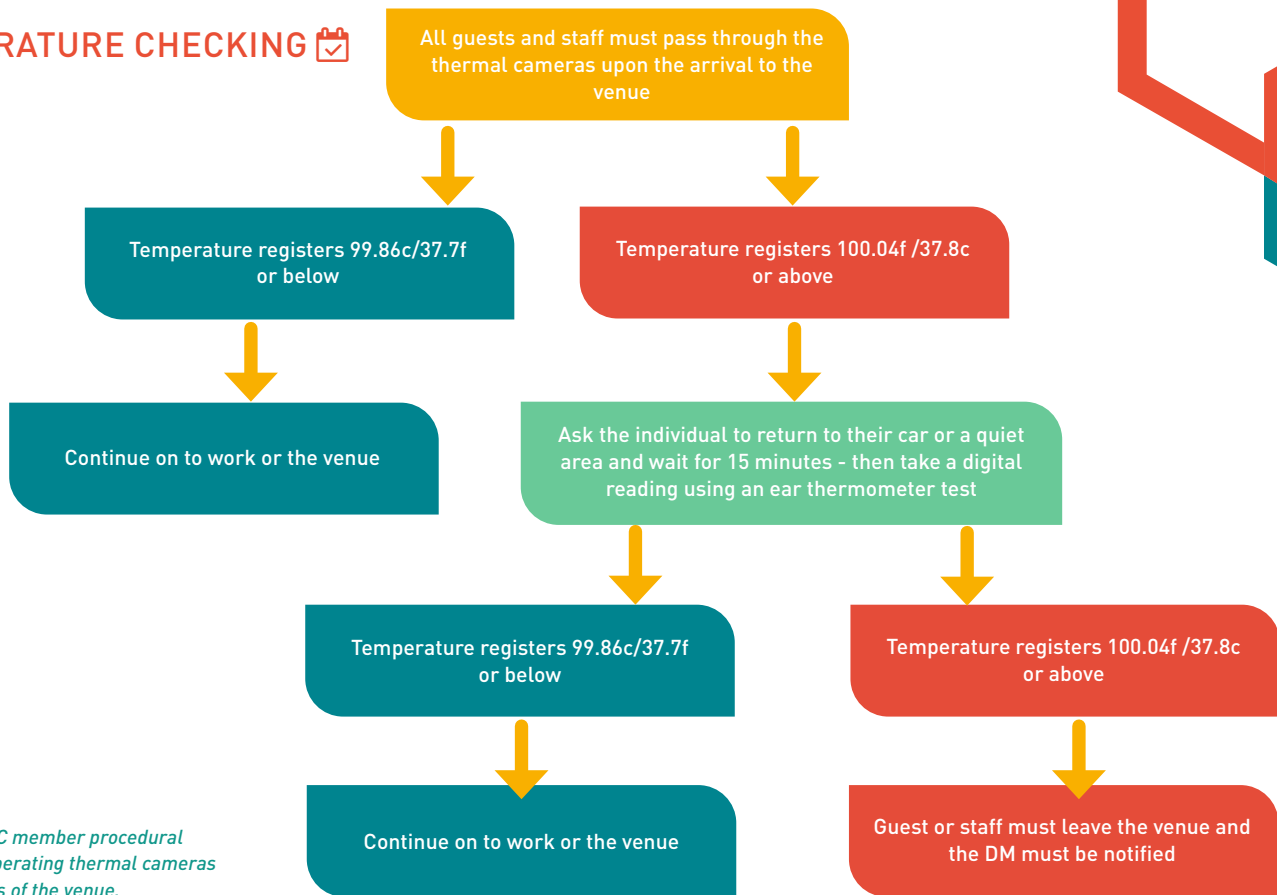
### TEMPERATURE CHECKING

Either hand-held temperature checking devices or statically situated scanner which can test multiple people walking through a give space together can be used. Given the higher levels of traffic at certain times of the day into main venue entrances, the distanced multi-person temperature checking solution carries a number of benefits.

One UK venue Wyboston Lakes, which has been operating for healthcare training throughout the crisis, has installed Vodafone Heat Detection Cameras at all entrances.



## TEMPERATURE CHECKING



*Example of IACC member procedural flowchart for operating thermal cameras at the entrances of the venue.*



## UV DISINFECTION ▼

Other technologies are currently being researched by industry organisations far-UVC [ultraviolet C] lighting devices. These devices sanitise not just surfaces but also meeting participants themselves, as they step through a special metal arch to enter an event space. The arch beams far-UVC light that neutralises viruses and bacteria on attendee's skin but does not damage the skin itself.



## DESIGNATED ENTRANCES AND EXITS ✕

Monitoring of any means of entering the venue is important and as a result, the number of entrances/exits in operation should be a careful balance of ability to staff these and the impact it has on reducing the traffic. Having a separate entrance and exit helps manage the directional flow of people.

*To help administer this practice, it is recommended that either floor graphics or traffic cones be used, as well as properly placed messaging stands in high visibility areas. See below for more on these products:*



### FLOOR GRAPHICS

- Fantastic for all smooth indoor surfaces like metal, plastic laminates, wood, linoleum, tile & carpeting
- Choice of permanent or semi-permanent adhesive
- Self-installed

*Note: Standard colors shown. Can be customized to your brand standards.*



## MEETING ATTENDEE CHECK IN

Although we focus on the delegate check in, we appreciate this is sometimes a combined check in for the event and for guest rooms.

Where possible, investigate ways for remote or contactless check in and consider if attendees can check in online before arrival and avoid signing reg cards or handing over credit cards with staff.

Pre-printing name badges at home is one way to reduce contact. Providing wayfinding and other venue information in advance is another. When offering on site check in, consider using personal protection shields at all desks, have ample hand sanitation stations, and clear messaging on the floor (as seen right) as well as with stanchion signs.

*Meeting check-in station with floor-standing hand sanitation stations.*

VGS has crafted a changeable offering to outfit the lobby with necessary items that are durable, fit your facility's design standards, and can be changed daily to meet the branding or messaging needs of your clients' conference. These signs and fixtures will be important in entry lobby's, stairwells and elevator corridors to communicate the safety protocols necessary for operating in the *new normal*.



*Conference registration design with screening and sanitation stations.*



## WAYFINDING TO MEETING SPACES ➡

Some early observations from venues who have begun welcoming back groups in June, suggests groups may have attendees who respect the measures put in place, wholly and some who are more relaxed and may need the rules clearly pointing out and if broken, being reminded of them. For this purpose, considering investing in moveable sanitation stations like the examples shown in this guide (the shelf unit can easily be transformed into a messaging + hand sanitizer + wipes station for guests to get critical information. The graphics can be all swapped via magnetic graphics for each conference rather than throwing away large custom signs/banners at each event).

Directing traffic from room to room, and keeping attendees separated while in-between sessions will be critical to success. Also shown below are examples of how the floor graphics, messaging stanchions and branded

traffic cones can work to guide guests through the experience:



*Clear signing, prominently located in areas leading to the restaurant.*



As we combine regulations adherence with maintaining a hospitable experience for our attendees, consider softer approaches to messaging, such as these:

Signage and venue mapping is an important way to make sure attendees remain in the areas of the building designated for their group. In the past venues may have focused on signage at the entrance of meeting rooms and not signage for other social or outdoor designated spaces, which will now be required as groups remain segregated from each other in venues which welcome multiple groups at one time.

*View these concepts for common areas, and products provided by [VGS](#) to bring safety to your space.*

*IACC Member Case Study: Kapellerput Conference Centre in the Netherlands opened for meetings on June 1. Rik Husken, Director advises IACC members to consider carefully the right balance between instructional signage and creating a hospitable and welcoming environment. Rik further explains that people have still adhered to distancing without floor markings, as this is now engrained in their automatic behaviour.*





### 3. DURING THE MEETING

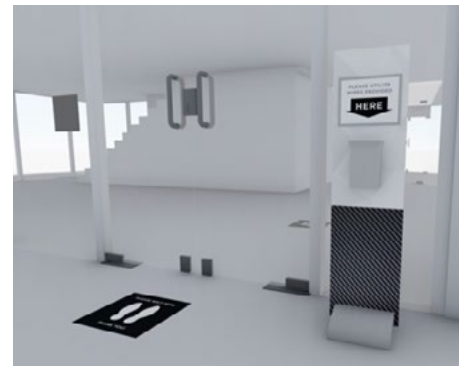
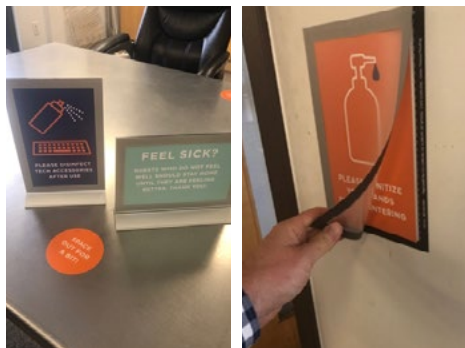
#### ATTENDEE SHARING OF REGULATIONS & PROCEDURES

**Event Contracts:** Venues may consider including a contract condition in their client agreement, which stipulates that attendees should be made aware of the venues procedures in place and how attendees play their part in ensuring a safe environment.

**Pre-Event:** Important procedures in place for attendees can be shared before the event and during the event. If it is assumed that an attendee did not read any pre-arrival information, this is prudent and therefore necessary for to begin each meeting with a 'fire-drill' style briefing.

Although the reference to a *fire-drill* approach is an example, consider the need to include physical distancing measures during building evacuations and share these with attendees.

While in seminars or smaller group meetings (boardrooms, one on one meetings, etc) keeping people distanced and safe will be critical. Consider investing in [VGS](#) signage and fixture systems for conference room tables, signage outside of rooms, etc. for proper messaging throughout your event space.





## CASE NOTIFICATION & MANAGEMENT 🗨️

Attendees should be given very clear instructions on case notification and be assured that the venue is well prepared with self-Isolation rooms and the issuing of support PPE for those that are identified as unwell.







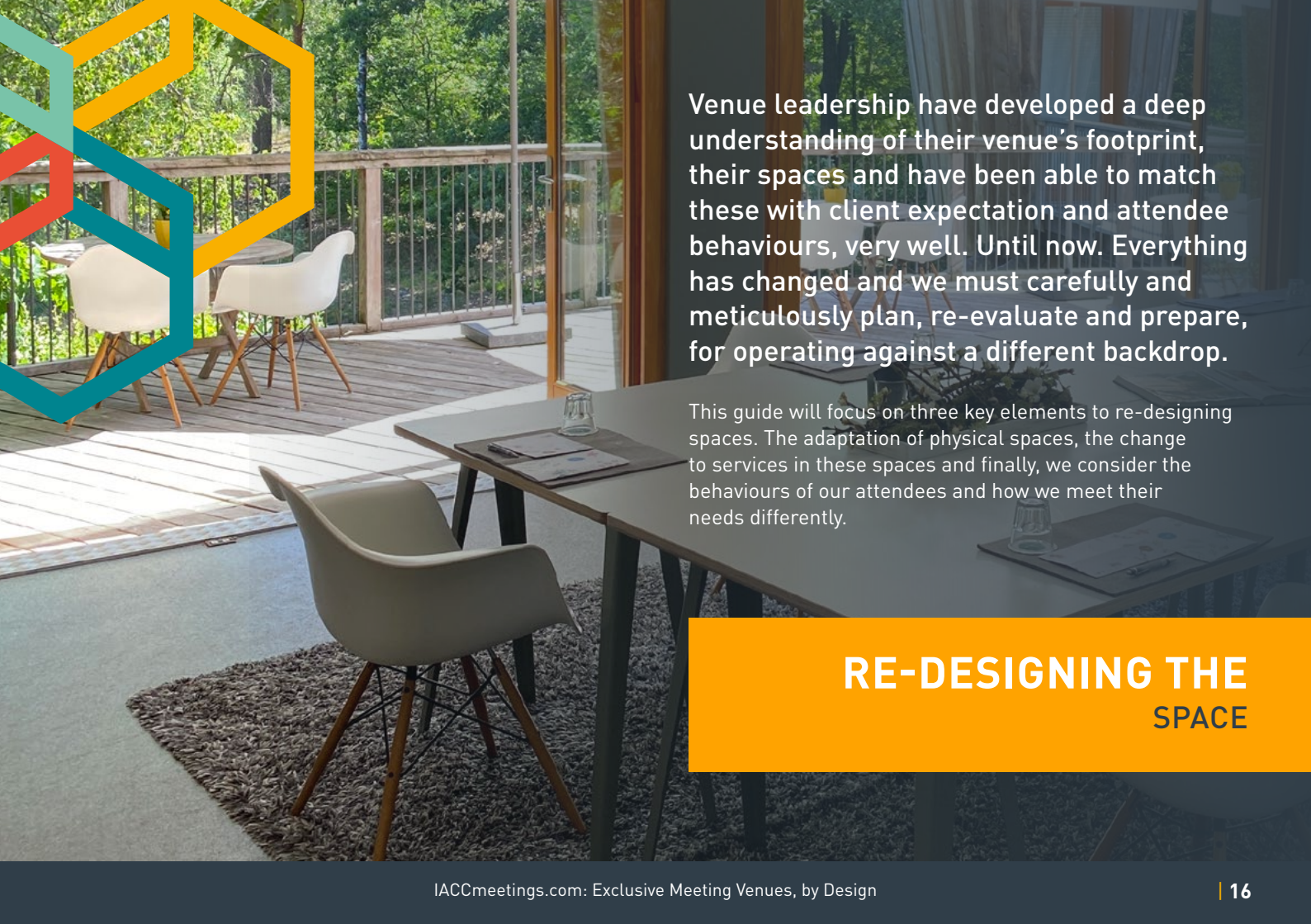
## 4. LEAVING THE MEETING

### PERSONAL ITEMS

Attendees should be made aware that all personal items, including writing materials, papers, pads and drinking vessels should be taken at the end of the meeting to avoid disposal by the venue cleaning team.

It is likely that some low value items left at the venue, given cross-contamination risks, will be disposed of by the venue where in the past they may have been held in lost and found.





Venue leadership have developed a deep understanding of their venue's footprint, their spaces and have been able to match these with client expectation and attendee behaviours, very well. Until now. Everything has changed and we must carefully and meticulously plan, re-evaluate and prepare, for operating against a different backdrop.

This guide will focus on three key elements to re-designing spaces. The adaptation of physical spaces, the change to services in these spaces and finally, we consider the behaviours of our attendees and how we meet their needs differently.

## RE-DESIGNING THE SPACE



# RE-DESIGNING SPACES



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# 1. MEETING ROOM PROTOCOLS

**Bathroom Monitors:** Assign a bathroom monitor during times of frequent use. Equip the entrances and interior space of your restroom areas with signage such as this:

## WALL-MOUNTED NOTIFICATION SIGNS

- Option 1: Subsurface printed .020 material with repositionable adhesive. Signs are scratch-resistant material with subsurface copy that are impervious to 99% of all cleaners
- Option 2: MegaFrame™ with paper insert
- Self-installed

Note: Standard colors shown. Can be customized to your brand standards.



## PHYSICAL DISTANCING ↔

**Entering/Exiting:** Delegate flow is important to evaluate for each meeting room. With one way and out, a system for delegate flow needs to be outlined. Examples could include:-

- Allocating somebody to act as a human traffic light system stationed at the door during start, end and break times.
- Requesting attendees adhere to leaving rooms just once during a break, as much as possible.
- Site refreshment break station in the room to avoid traffic in and out.
- Floor signs to outline areas only one person can enter at a time.

For rooms with more than one door, allocate each as an entrance or exit with clear signage.

**Contactless:** Consider automatically opening doors, or propping doors open to avoid attendees using handles. Where neither is possible during sessions for instance, allocate one person to open/close doors at break times. Consider contactless door pulls (using bottom of shoe to open).

## Door Pull



## IN ROOM SANITATION MEASURES – DURING MEETING 🔄

**Screening:** Where sanitation stations or break stations are sited in the meeting room, consider protective screening measures for these. Particularly where sited close to a pre-determined flow of traffic. Consider sanitiser at each conference table, and also various sanitation stations like the VGS sanitiser stand shown on this page.

See how easily changeable these can be conference to conference as branding, protocols or other messaging needs to change.



**Personal Sanitation:** Consider sanitation stations close to entry and exit doors or areas of the room where there is low traffic flow. Individual sanitisers such as gel, spray or wipes placed on each attendee desk is a good option and may further benefit from client company or venue branding.

**Furniture Sanitation:** Each chair and table should be allocated by name or number to each attendee for the day. If numbered, the list should be clearly available to see, like a table plan would be at a dinner.

Increase the frequency of cleaning often-touched surfaces in the common areas, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs. Use cleaning and disinfectant products with

Country specific Environment Protection Agency approved chemicals rated for emerging viral pathogens.

*Screens separating individuals in a classroom style setting.*



*Routes in and out of the meeting room mapped out for delegate flow*



*Screened area for presenter table and presentation walk area (projector cannot be floor mounted)*





**Equipment Sanitation:** Equipment consists of AV/IT shared equipment either permanently installed in the room or portable equipment:

**Permanently Installed Equipment:**

If used by one person (i.e the trainer/ host), the equipment should be sanitised at least once per day. If used by multiple presenters during the meeting, then each piece of equipment should be sanitised after each presenter.

**Portable Equipment:** The same approach as taken with permanently installed equipment, with the additional measure of deep cleaning carried out by conference services before installation and physical distancing observed between staff and presenter when handed over. No passing of remotes between staff and presenter without sanitation having taken place.

*IACC member Eric Bracht of AVaStar highlights that portable equipment may pose additional challenges for the meetings of the future. Venues that consider an engineered, purpose-built solution will be better prepared for the future of hybrid meetings.*

*By design, portable equipment can be used in multiple locations, including rooms in the same facility as well as in completely different facilities. Separate facilities may have different sanitation standards, resulting in other risk factors and processes to consider.*

**Conference Consumables:** It is currently best practice not to provide attendee pads and pens on conference tables, unless they can be personalised. Wherever possible, encourage either delegates to bring their own identifiable writing materials or use smartphone or tablet technology.

If stationary is provided in the room for host use, these toolkits should undergo daily sanitation and then when a meeting ends, they should be sanitised and locked away for 72-hours before being allocated to another group.

**Attendee Water:** Consider using contactless water dispensers in rooms. Alternatively provide the ability for attendees to personalise plastic bottles to avoid mixing up with others. Shared water jugs should not be used in meeting rooms.

**In Room Table Sweets:** These should not be provided; all food should be designated to food stations or dining areas where controls are in place.

**Meeting Room Linens:** Set up meeting tables or other service stations without linens, but if linens are used, replace after each use.

**Waste:** As part of room refresh or deep cleaning procedures, the removal and disposal of any items considered redundant should be stepped up accordingly and meeting hosts advised of the approach to handling and disposing of waste.

**Breakout Rooms:** These spaces should be treated with the same sanitation, servicing and cleaning protocols as for plenary rooms. If the room is to be frequented by new attendees at any given time, then the same cleaning and sanitation procedures should be carried out as for overnight cleaning, including for any equipment.



## IN ROOM SANITATION MEASURES – BETWEEN EVENTS 🌀

In addition to the measures taken during an event, rooms will undergo a more thorough sanitation process after each group leaves.

### Room Fogging:



Fogging is a practice which is widely being used to clean cabins of planes and can be a viable option for meeting rooms between groups.

*IACC Member Case Study: Woodlands Conference Centre in the UK has not adopted fogging in the re-opening of its venue this month. General Manager Simon McMahon comments "At this time we can leave a meeting space empty for 72-hours between groups and usual cleaning methods apply. When occupancy levels rise where we cannot leave rooms unused for 72-hours, then we will consider applying room fogging techniques."*

**Check & Seal:** Each room after end of event cleaning has taken place, should undergo a supervisory check to ensure all required actions have been taken. Consider the use of UV Wands to conduct more detailed checks. Once satisfied, the room is locked and sealed to demonstrate it is ready for the next group.

**HVAC & Ventilation:** The HVAC systems in most non-medical buildings play only a small role in infectious disease transmission, including COVID-19, according to various reports. For further detailed information, read this [report](#) by the European Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations.

**Room Cleaning Protocols:** Consider the use of automated hoovers to reduce the number of people required to enter rooms to service and refresh them.

Review lost and found procedures and if necessary, specify low value items which are to be disposed of, which previously would have been taken to lost and found. Where possible, rotate rooms being used, to further reduce risk of contamination from one group to another.

**Room Recovery Protocols:** After a suspected case of Covid-19 from an attendee, the venue should have in place measures which may include quarantining the room for 72-hours. Measures should be taken in accordance with governmental guidelines.

**Public Areas:** Public areas, including those which encounter high volume traffic, restrooms/toilets, reception desks, handrails and bannisters should be cleaned more regularly. The accepted practice by IACC members reviewed is every hour.

## OUTDOOR MEETING SPACES

The use of outdoor spaces for meetings is considered a safer environment than indoors in relation to the risk of cross-contamination between people. These spaces are likely to be a preferred option when possible for plenary or breakout sessions.

The same protocols for creating safe spaces, as outlined above should be adhered to. Some aspects of an outdoor environment may require taking different sanitation or people management/flow/traffic approaches, for instance in a woodland setting with upturned logs as stools, woodland pathways etc.



## ZONING FOR CLARITY

Consider a clear approach to visual zoning in the spaces throughout the venue, to assist in managing cleaning and safeguarding measures.

*Area Zoning Adopted at Woodlands Venue  
in United Kingdom.*

### Cleaning and safeguarding

- **Blue Zones**  
Employee work stations  
Reception desks, bars, podiums, serveries  
Cleaned and Sanitised every 30 Minutes
- **Green Zones**  
Public areas with high touch points  
Toilets, coffee lounges  
Cleaned and Sanitised every hour
- **Yellow Zones**  
Exclusive areas  
Meeting rooms, restaurant tables, bedrooms  
Cleaned and Sanitised before use



## 2. MEETING ROOM LAYOUTS

### MEETING SPACE DESIGN & RETROFIT ↕

When considering the meeting design needed to achieve the required collaboration and to meet the objectives of the meeting, room layouts may look different, sometimes very different.

Whilst appreciating that countries will need to incorporate physical distancing to differing specifications, the evolution of spaces may well follow similar paths. Working with IACC member [Rabun Architects](#) in the US, Principal's Taylor French, AIA and Dana Rector, AIA set out a three-level approach to transforming meeting areas, based in differing investment points:



### LEVEL 1 - SHORT-TERM (LEAST INVESTMENT) 📌

#### **Social-distancing furniture plans:**

Using existing furnishings, new arrangements can be created to allow interactive events, while respecting the social distancing guidelines.

**Simulcasting:** With today's technology, we can bring people together both in person and online. Simulcasting allows a smaller number of people to attend events, as they are able to, yet still provide the reach of a larger virtual audience. Additionally, as venue capacity is reduced (due to distancing guidelines), the same sized event may be staged in multiple rooms, or even across multiple venues.

**Outdoor Event Space:** Social distancing is furthered by hosting an event in an outdoor or semi-enclosed space, where transmission is reduced. Venues that currently have exterior space can

promote these spaces, while other venues may consider converting exterior spaces, such as parking lots/ garages for their events. These could be dressed up with investments in pedestal paver systems and other temporary structures.



*Pedestal paver systems to covert spaces for events.*

## LEVEL 2 - MID-TERM (LARGER INVESTMENT) 🏠

**Modular Meeting Pods:** Meeting spaces and Lobby Spaces could be transformed by the use of Modular Meeting Pods. These come ready-to-go including furniture, lighting, power, and A/V equipment. Smaller spaces allow for

easy sanitisation between meetings.

One company we have looked at is <https://workspace.snapcab.com/>. I have also seen other companies that offer even larger pods.



*Modular Meeting Pod*

**Modular Meeting Rooms:** Furthering the pod concept, entire meeting venues could be constructed out of portable classrooms. I am not sure if there are companies marketing specifically to the meeting industry, but there could be a good opportunity for this. Imagine a whole series of rooms around a central exterior courtyard as you see from the example from Allwood.

**Operable Glass Walls:** One trend currently appearing in design is the notion of visibility into meeting spaces, especially those adjacent to public

spaces such as lobbies. An investment in retrofitting an operable glass NanaWall into an existing meeting space not only allows for safe ingress and egress of a space with social distancing, but also brings the space in line with current design trends.



*Allwood Bonaire Cabin might be considered when seeking to increase small meeting room spaces using outdoor areas.*



## LONG TERM (MOST INVESTMENT) 📌

**Living Room Spaces:** In line with current hospitality trends, meeting spaces are becoming less of a “multi-use room” and more of a “living room” space (WeWork-esque), with comfortable lounge seating and a more residential feel. Several brands have implemented these (for example Crowne Plaza has The Studio). Existing meeting spaces could be converted into these type of spaces, which because of their compact size, allow for a more comfortable atmosphere for smaller groups of people.

**Hospitality Suites:** We imagine that hotels may convert rooms into hospitality suites to entice small meeting groups. A hospitality suite is a hotel room that provides meeting space within the room. Typically, it is two hotel rooms wide, with a small kitchen, a living room with a sofa-bed, and a conference table. The benefit of hospitality suites is they can be sold as a guestroom, or rented out as meeting

space. It also allows a small group to convene without interacting with a larger group in a public space like a lobby.



*Hospitality suite at the Westin Birmingham, Alabama.*

## EVOLVING LAYOUTS ↻

Tables and chair design and dimensions will play a big part in maximising occupancy.



*Kapellerput Conference Centre in the Netherlands,  
1.5m seating spacing.*

In this section of the guide, we assess the impact different room layouts with physical distancing has on room occupancies. We consider the need to provide innovative and creative new designs to assist clients with meeting the objectives of their event. The guide outlines examples of members adapting traditional layouts and also offer up

new layouts which incorporate the required distancing and still provide for the required exchange or information sharing.

## ROOM LAY-OUTS: FROM NEED TO OPPORTUNITY

First and foremost, we need to recognise the *need* for physical distancing, inside and outside meeting rooms. However, there are also interesting *opportunities* to leverage the new circumstances and bring some highly needed fresh ideas into your talks with meeting planners.

In general, we think continuity in the meetings industry will require better, more focused meetings, with better outcomes. All of a sudden, your competitors are no longer other destinations and other venues – they are Zoom and Google! This means meeting professionals in venues will need to be better placed to provide high-level advice to planners that will help enhance the participant experience. Better alignment between seating

arrangements and meeting outcomes is one of the areas where we will need to expand our insights and offers.

Together with our partners of [www.Mindmeeting.org](http://www.Mindmeeting.org) meeting designers, and Rabun Architects and AllSeated, we can give you some alternatives at a glance. As food for thought, mainly, because there are many more options!

Naturally, what clients will be focusing on in the first instance, is seating arrangements that respect physical distancing. Here are two examples from IACC venue Dolce Sitges (Spain) of 3-D renderings of floor plans you can quickly sketch out with AllSeated's software:

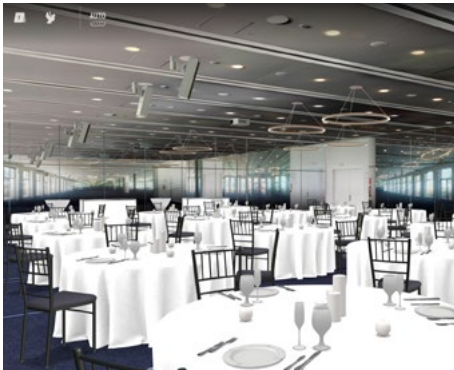






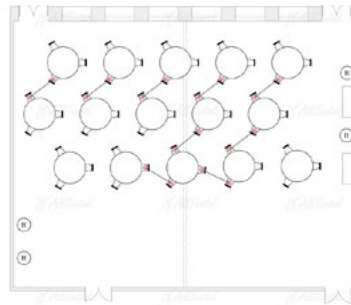
The above features comfortable chairs, placed at the right distance.

Using seats with tables, the same room looks like this:



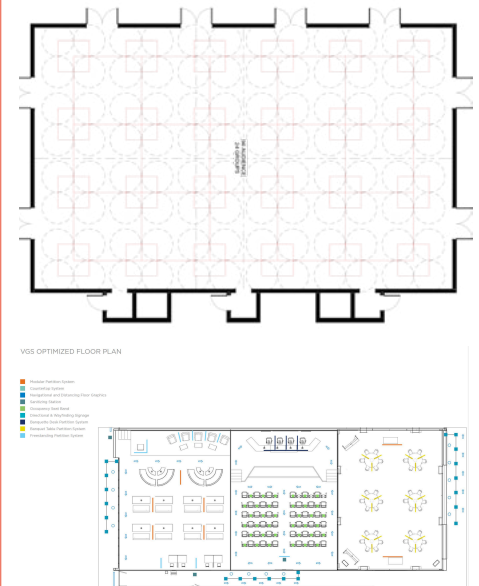
Using software such as Allseated, you can rotate these images in 3-D, allowing planners to have a complete view of the room.

Interestingly, the software allows you to enter the required physical distance as a setting and the software will automatically indicate how much furniture you can actually fit into the room. Insufficient distance lights up as red dots with an arrow:



But these examples merely allow you to comply with new standards. Things become much more interesting if you manage to show your client opportunities for more effective new room lay-outs while still remaining

within those new standards. For instance, what if you want to have a group of participants quickly shift between listening to a stage-born presentation and consultations in small groups about which they report back? The floor plan would look something like this:



Zoom in to see Optimised Meeting Space Plan

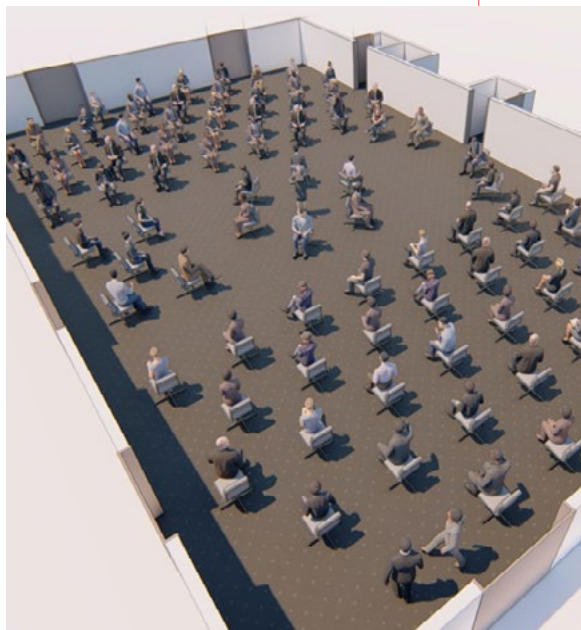
This works really well with swivel chairs and some markings on the floor that indicate which four people together form a discussion group of 4. To make it more attractive, you can imagine using small tables or pot plants as dividers between the groups. The stage can fit anywhere in this set-up; thanks to the swivel chairs, participants can instantly move between watching the stage and being a member of a small discussion group.

If you want working groups of 5 or 6 participants, you just need to adapt the floor plan and use pentagons or hexagons to divide the space.

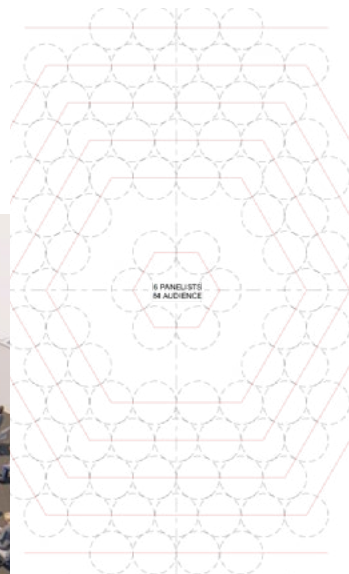
And let's take this one step further: how about proposing your client a different seating for a panel discussion, or a different format altogether for a meeting where you would like to explore content. Such as a fishbowl: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishbowl\\_\(conversation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishbowl_(conversation))

You can use a central stage to dramatically reduce the distance between presenters or panel members and participants – particularly relevant now that everybody has the uncanny feeling that they are “far away”.

Which in 3-D, looks like this:



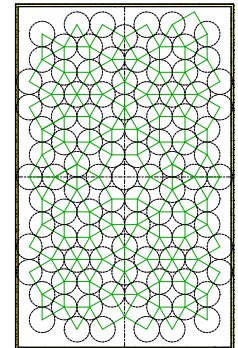
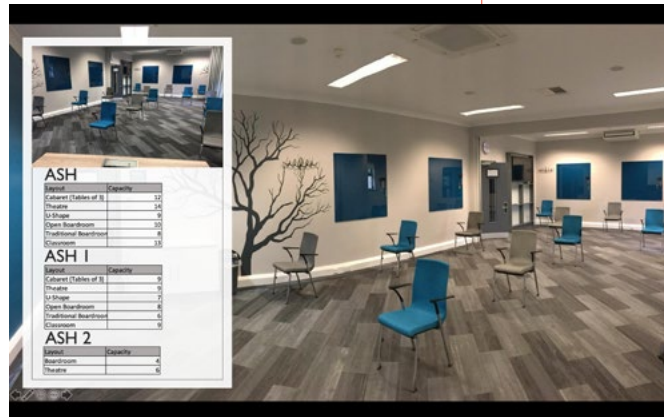
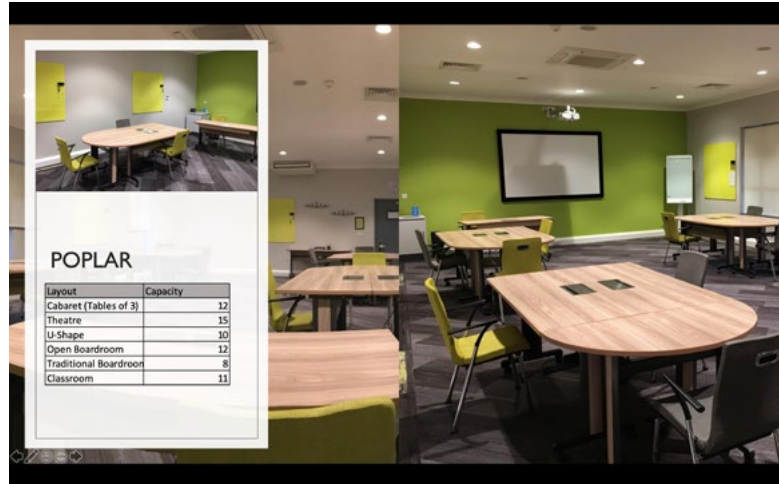
Here is an example of a floor plan for this kind of set-up:



It is easy to imagine details that would make this set-up less stiff, for instance placing the chairs in semi-circles, all facing towards the centre, where the action is.

In conclusion: there is much to gain for venues if they use a good mix of professionalism, business acumen and creativity. Move your conversation with planners from complying with new rules and regulations to the level of exploring what they really want to achieve in terms of outcomes and objectives. It is very likely that a totally different seating arrangement from the classical ones will turn out a win-win!

*Example of room sets captured with new capacities for client review, shared by Woodlands Events Centre, United Kingdom.*



**Attendees with special needs:**

All of the same rules apply in terms of accommodating attendees' special needs as it relates to disabilities, as were in place prior to COVID-19. Any new room layouts, access measures and service areas developed, must comply with disability acts and be compliant with governmental regulations.

**Multi-Plenary Rooms:** Consider the breaking down larger groups into smaller groups by adopting a multi-plenary room approach. Using room to room streaming technologies, this can be a further risk-reducing measure where presenter/s can be allocated to different rooms at different times.





## 3. TECHNOLOGY

### SUITABILITY OF EXISTING TECHNOLOGIES

Some existing technologies may no longer be as suitable as available alternatives.

**Flipcharts & Pads:** A long time staple of the meeting room, the flipchart and pad's future was already in question linked to emerging electronic alternatives such as squiggle glass and the impact on the environment through their use of paper.

*Eric Bracht of AVaStar highlights some of the digital flipchart products in the market and being used by venues. Samsung Flip and i3Technologies i3SIXTY as examples. Other alternatives include Squiggle Glass, that can be permanently installed in meeting rooms allowing it to be cleaned after each use.*

Using alternatives to flipcharts and paper pads in the coming months is recommended as it takes out a potential piece of equipment that might be

shared between people and also creates waste and replenishing that increases potential for cross-contamination.

Explain Everything is one example of digital whiteboarding which was available in the classroom and has now pivoted to being a solution for remote working group collaboration. As we become used to using new technologies in homeworking situations, these will be more easily adopted in the meeting room when we return.

**Shareable Microphones:** Any AV which relies on passing hardware between attendees is going to be avoided for some time. Alternatives to these include app based solutions such as Crowd Mics allowing attendees to transform their smartphone into a microphone for conference Q&A sessions.



*i3 Technologies i3SIXTY*



## TECHNOLOGIES FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE

Since the braking of this pandemic, people's ability and speed to embrace new technologies in life has quickened substantially. It is to be assumed that as meetings return in a face to face environment, that this willingness to embrace the new will continue. Here are some areas where we may see this happen.

**Hybrid Meetings:** Widely assumed that when live meetings return, they will embrace the opportunity to engage virtual audiences and increase value.

Venues influence the ability to stage hybrid meetings in a number of ways and can develop the product offer, as outlined in the Re-designing the Product section of this guide.

**Acoustics & Lighting:** Venues can support the ability to relay strong sound and image capture and relay by offering additional in-room lighting (think film set) and sound capture



(i.e. ceiling mounted over table microphones).

**Bandwidth Quality:** Hybrid streaming can be one or two-way and take place for hours or even days. In either case a venue needs to offer the bandwidth and quality of delivery of internet over long periods of time.

**Registration:** Virtual attendees need to register for an event just as an in-person attendee does. With different instructions on how to join and tech support to trouble-shoot. This is a service venues can consider offering in future.

**Cyber-security:** Venues offering webcasting or video conferencing platform solutions to clients, should consider that often non-commercial versions of software may be cheaper subscriptions, but at the same time may not offer the same higher-level security settings.



## TECHNOLOGIES FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE



### ***Unified Collaboration Platform (UCP):***

Many venues are already prepared to accommodate concurrent connected independent smaller meetings. Integrating UCP technology into these events, either with built-in sound systems and visual displays & cameras or using portable AV equipment will permit the clusters of smaller group meetings to be interconnected.

Given capacities affected by physical distancing, some groups in future may be accommodated by using more than one plenary room, using UCP to connect rooms.

In order to accommodate multiple event spaces venues must be equipped with a robust tie line infrastructure. This “AV Network” provides audio/video signal transport between various spaces and between those spaces and the venue’s network and internet infrastructure and services.

Due to physical distancing guidelines smaller groups will require larger meeting spaces. This will emphasize

the need for proper room acoustics as well as the need for sound systems to permit the in-person attendees to hear the presentation, each other, and to facilitate participation.

IACC member [AVaStar](#) provides consultancy services to assist venues in appraising space and technology needs when using a unified collaboration platform and the cameras, microphone systems needed to work effectively in different meeting rooms. It is important to note that UCP technology is in addition to basic AV presentation technology. Typical meetings without remote attendees still need to have visual displays and voice reinforcement

systems, especially when meeting room layouts cause larger rooms to be used for fewer attendees. The UCP is attached to the already present (built-in or portable) AV systems; UCP is not a stand-alone technology.

It is also important to note that built-in AV systems that are engineered for the space being served perform far better than portable AV systems that are moved around as needed. And “huddle” systems with displays, cameras, and sound bars are designed to serve very small groups of four to six participants at each end. They will NOT work well at all for larger group meetings, and especially not in larger spaces.



*IACC Member AVaStar explains the importance of having a well-designed Unified Collaboration Platform (UCP).*



## 4. OUTSIDE THE MEETING

### PRE-FUNCTION/SOCIAL INDOOR SPACES 📌

**Group Segregation:** As much as possible, locating groups in areas of the building the furthest from other groups is recommended. Social and networking spaces should be clearly signed and private for each group.

**Furniture Layouts:** Layouts of furniture, seating and tabling should adhere to physical distancing regulations at all times. Consideration of the location of furniture in areas with through walkways close by should be sited to avoid close contact to people passing by.

**Networking & Safe Distancing:** Distancing measures according to government regulations apply in this environment. Venue staff taking on the role ensuring attendees abide by rules, should consider training on how to manage situations in a calm and hospitable manner, including how

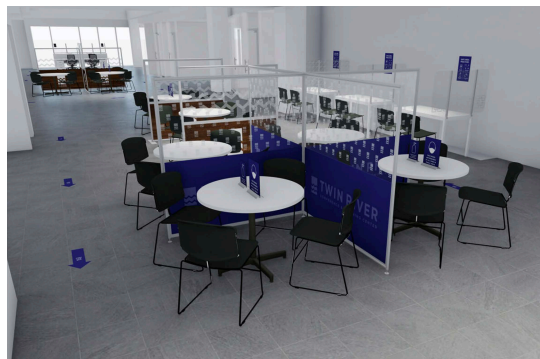
to deal with persistent breaking of distancing rules.

#### **Pre-determining maximum capacity:**

Each area which will be used to host a single group should be evaluated for capacity maximums in line with any other space to adhere to physical distancing requirements.



*The use of clear bi-fold partitions can be effectively used to turn social space into a dedicated meeting room and vice versa.*



**Information & Signage:** Use proper traffic flow tools like floor graphics, directional signage, and partitioning with clear occupancy signage in each breakout room, lobby area etc. in order to ensure the highest level of safety. See below concepts from VGS for common areas and signage for occupancy:



**Information & Signage:** Zoom in to see the above signage detail.

## REFRESHMENT BREAK STATIONS / AREAS ☕

**Set-Up's:** Refreshment break stations should be set up to accommodate a single group, who can access in a reasonable amount of time, with the least amount of queuing. Floor decals should be in place to ensure attendees adhere to physical distancing should queuing be necessary.

Should the group size necessitate, multi-stations should be considered and/or locating single items as their own station (i.e fruit or juice station).

Siting a group refreshment break station in the plenary room both reduces traffic to other areas and takes away the risks of other groups using another groups station.

**Beverage Dispensing:** Consider bottled cold drinks only and no self-serve bulk dispensers. Water stations with contactless dispensing are recommended. A member of staff allocated to break stations to dispense

hot drinks and conduct regular sanitation procedures is recommended.

**Food Product Dispensing:** Consider the bundling of food items with seals confirming they have been tamper free.

**Break Station Hygiene & Cleaning Protocols:** The venue food and beverage service team and any staff member present in these areas, should operate in full alignment with the properties detailed food and beverage service protocols, as they would in kitchen and restaurant areas. These detailed procedures are part of the scope for this guide, please refer to other excellent guides on IACC's Covid-19 Venue Re-opening Resources Page for examples.

Consider in all food/beverage areas, have an attendant handing items to customers under a personal protection screen. VGS offers many light weight, moveable structures to fit this need.







## 5. DINING

### MEETING ATTENDEE DINING

The aim of this guide is not to provide detailed hygiene standards as related to food and beverage service. Instead it lays out considerations for different approaches to service and food types.

**Self-Serve Buffets:** Widely accepted as a service type which will not be present in venues for some time, venues are instead planning for individually plated food service.

Should a buffet style presentation be called for, the venue should consider placing attendee partitioning/sneeze guards in place and food being plated by staff member, then handed to an attendee at a place away from the main food station.

As opposed to large-volume hot/cold holding units (i.e., chafing dishes), food



presentations will be more home-like, with small batch cooking and food micro-plated to avoid increased guest contact as well as product and surfaces subject to contamination.

**Service Counters:** Either fixed or mobile, should have breath barriers to protect staff and attendees. Single-sided stations further reduce risk.

**Grab & Go Service & Pop-Up Stations:** Offering individually situated Grab & Go stations will support the reduction in traffic at main dining locations and is ideally placed to serve packaged food products.

*Case Study: Considering the continued importance of sustainable events now and in the future, venues that incorporate products like Verterra.com dinnerware made from fallen leaves and choosing canned and bottled solutions over plastic, will be respected by clients and attendees.*



*One of a number of breakfast station at Wyboston Lakes in the UK.*

**Boxed Meals / Bento:** This style food service can go hand in hand with a quality offer. It is not to be perceived as a poor-quality offer to buffets or other service styles. Food packaging can support the quality feel and also environmentally friendly packaging materials used, will create a strong sustainability message.

**Member Case Study:** *Dolce La Hulpe in Belgium has taken the decision to extend its dining room outdoors developing a terraced area with seating and service points, giving delegates the choice to dine indoors or out.*



## GROUP SIZES 🐾

Consider breaking larger groups up into multiple dining areas.



*Swedish dining room replacing larger group set up for smaller settings respecting 1.5m distancing.*

**Member Case Study:** *After setting their restaurant with tables for 2 persons, Kapellerput Conference Centre in the Netherlands (open for meetings since June 1) were soon asked by groups to change layouts to long group table settings, with 1.5m distancing between seats.*



**Kapellerput Conference Centre in the Netherlands:** *Guest pre-prepared breakfast platter.*

**POS/Cashiering Stations:** In many IACC venue conference dining situations, POS or cashier presence is not required. However, where this is in place, consider tablets or guests ordering via smartphone app and to stipulating a no-cash policy. Any location of a cashier/ POS should support the required traffic flow. This situation should also be supported with floor graphics and provide personal protection screen at the POS counter, as seen below VGS products rendered into a concept environment.



### Hand Sanitation in Dining Areas:

Locating hand sanitiser stations should be set up in areas where food service takes place.

**Food Clearing:** Consider replacing past table service with the location of multiple plate and cutlery drop stations for attendees to self-clean after food service. Staff then to clean and sanitise each table after guest use.

**Menus & Dietary Information:** Look to digital displays in entrance areas to show menu information.

For paper-based item labelling, such as allergen information, set in place regular replacement of these after each service.

**Pre-determining Dining Area Maximum Capacity:** As with any meeting or social space, Room Layouts respecting social distancing.

## BAR AREAS & GROUP RECEPTIONS 🍷

**Venue Permanent Bar Areas:** In many countries, at the time of publication, many bars and restaurants are just beginning to re-open and in some countries only where there is outdoor seating areas. In countries where bars are operating, a number have put in place smartphone ordering and table service by staff only.

**Product Ranges:** It is likely that when bars re-open that in phase one, draft beers will not be available, and cocktails and spirits will be pre-mixed.

Consider wine service from tap/keg as a low-contact style of service. Freeflow Wines and other on-tap suppliers work with quality wine producers including Trinchero Family Estates in California, to supply wine by keg and operate from a sealed dispenser.

Kegged wine not only incurs less contact, the wine carries a much longer shelf life and is very portable to different pop-up bar locations on property.

**IACC Member Experience:** *Rik Hüsken, Director of Kapellerput Conference Hotel in the Netherlands, who has been operational in June has opened their bar. They ask guests to respect the physical distancing as set out for other areas. Rik's staff are trained to monitor at a higher level in the bar, as one potential outcome from being in a social and relaxed environment, may be the risk of guests forgetting these measures.*





Space utilisation is a focus for operators at this time, as physical distancing calls for the re-design of meeting rooms, pre-function areas and social spaces. The reality of adhering to current distancing laws is resulting in spaces accommodating anything from 25% to 66% of usual capacity. This requires venues to balance carefully the pricing of spaces and services and the demand for space.

## RE-DESIGNING THE PRODUCT



# RE-DESIGNING THE PRODUCT



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# 1. SHOWING UP WITH EMPATHY AND HEART

## MESSAGING

Venue operators understand that buyer and attendee priorities have evolved. Safety, security and cleanliness will remain at the forefront of client and guest concerns. From a sales and marketing perspective, transparency and consistency across all platforms will be absolutely essential. Messaging should be focused on communicating clearly to clients and attendees everything that is being done to ensure their safety.

Effectively showing not just the steps that are being taken, but how important these areas are and how seriously management teams are taking them can be THE difference-maker setting a venue apart from others.

For buyers who will be looking for peace of mind, a venue's willingness to demonstrate flexibility, clear communication, and the ability to operate confidently, responsively and with empathy will be enormously important.

Which is why there cannot be any confusion or inconsistency. Operations, Sales & Marketing, e-Commerce and Revenue Management will all need to work closely together to ensure that messaging stays the same and is applied to all necessary collateral, channels, sites and social media platforms.



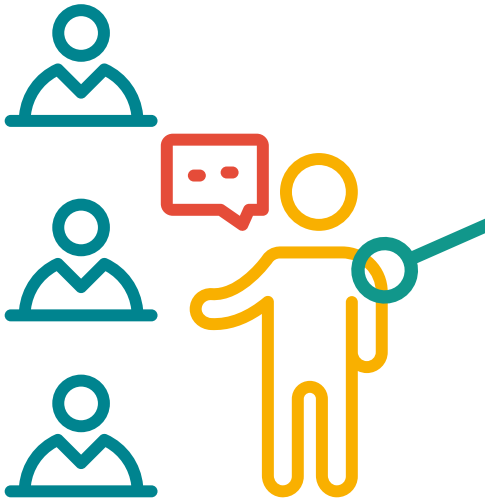
## 2. MEETING DIFFERENTLY

A consequence of humans becoming more comfortable and adept at home-working, could be companies embracing this way of working and reducing cost by reducing office space.

This may be a significant opportunity for venues, in two ways;

**1. Less internal meeting spaces, resulting in a rise in demand for venues to host previously internally located meetings.**

**2. A greater need for homeworkers to come together face to face, to meet and exchange ideas.**



## EXPANDING SERVICES & REVENUE CHANNELS

With the added complexities of meetings and conferences returning, meeting planners will be stretched to deliver the new norm. For venues in a position to offer ancillary services such as transportation and destination-linked experiences and services, they can be seen as a more critical partner.

On-line platforms such as [Destin by e-destinACCESS](#) offer venues the ability to provide their clients with these services, including hybrid meetings management.

The destin platform has many capabilities and features, all of which can be provided as a service for properties, or you can utilise destin as a SaaS platform.

- Substantial incremental revenue(s) for the conference venue; or resort. Profit share can be 60/40 of the GP%. Includes the ability to book reservations directly, schedule transfers starting at the attendee's home to airport, airport to centre, complete online registration, monetizing the virtual attendees and much more.
- Hybrid meetings with online registration for virtual attendees that can be monetised.
- Built in online registration (hosted or non-hosted offerings, virtual or live attendance),
- Planner customised dashboard and all their important documents accessible from any device.
- Attendee who uses the online registration receives a custom dashboard that has their Itinerary, vouchers, etc.
- The transportation tool creates automatic vehicle schedules, so you control the budget, not the transportation companies.
- Electronic departure notices.
- Single entry so one system instead of multiple.
- CRM capture for all attendees that can build big data.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE PRODUCT REVISIONS

In other areas of this guide we focus on the operational considerations of changes to our food and beverage and in this section, we consider the change to the products and how we sell and market these to our clients.

It is evident that some of our USP's in the past, do not translate into value for clients in the future and may now be avoided.

**Refreshment Breaks:** The continuous shared group refreshment break station, which was well stocked and constantly refreshed, is not a service model that works in an environment with physical distancing measures in place or where attendees are consciously or subconsciously evaluating hygiene risks and avoiding shared food and beverage areas.

**IACC Member Case Study:** *Sigtunahojden, Stockholm has introduced a picnic style boxed break, with snacks for attendees to take outside and eat in the sun. Made from biodegradable packaging, it also encourages attendees to go outdoors and walk and relax.*



Offering clients individual group stations and closely located social areas will be important and when possible, promoting the siting of these outdoors will be well received planners evaluating venues.

When it is not possible to move to individual group set ups, rotating groups over multiple stations (Juice bar, cake station, fruit station etc.), each get an allotted time for each.

Each of these service changes can be delivered to the client in a way which

reassures them, builds confidence and trust with them. For instance, updating floorplans to reflect which areas you may designate for sole use by a group.

**Continuous or Fixed Breaks?:** For some time, the benefits of continuous break stations, uncoupling groups from a rigid event timetable, have been well received. However today, structure, order and management of people at fixed times may offer more reassurance than before and be of greater value to them. Consider which is best, balancing venue layout and client preferences.

**Dining - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner & Snacks:** The bundling of multiple items (think fruit, chips and a soft drink) together carries two possible benefits. Firstly, the convenience aspect and secondly the environmental impact, as this approach uses less single-use plastics potentially.

All evidence points to meeting planners still seeing sustainable meetings as one of a now greater list of priorities and it is not going away just because of other areas of importance. In fact, global research suggests that we now value the health of our planet more greatly after experiencing the effects of this pandemic.

**The Premium Outdoors:** In many countries, restaurants and bars with outdoor spaces, have been the first to re-open and real or perceived, the risks to individuals to meeting outdoors is important to note. Venues with outdoor dining, networking or meeting spaces can consider these a premium for clients and may find greater



Outdoor breakout space offered at Warwick Conferences, United Kingdom

featuring in venue marketing and client communications.

**Reduced Menu Options:** Many venues need to reduce the number of options available on their menus as they consider simplifying the food preparation and kitchen staffing. When the realities of reduced menu options are coupled with a determined effort to source locally and quality ingredients, this will resonate with attendees potentially more now, as we have in many ways swapped convenience for quality in our private lives during lockdown.

## VIRTUAL VENUE APPRAISAL & SITE INSPECTIONS 📄

With travel restricted, with space utilisation changed and planners wanting to scrutinise space in more detail, the evolution of the virtual site inspection continues with more demand now placed on this option.

**Think Outside of the Meeting Room:** Whilst meeting spaces are important to visualise, especially if your usual layout is changing due to incorporating

*Pre-prepared individual breakfast platter served to each guest at Kapellerput Conference Centre, Netherlands.*



physical distancing measures, the spaces outside of the meeting room are an important part of the virtual evaluation for planners.

**The Meeting Room:** Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and other 360-degree floorplan platforms, where users can incorporate physical distancing spacing to the modelling are very helpful tools for meeting planners.

## IACC Associate Member Feature



In early 2020 All Seated developed a new virtual appraisal platform, which incorporates video conferencing. Consider a 5 person client group, joining the virtual walk through and each can interact and talk with each other just as you can on any conference call.



Hygiene Endorsement & Auditing: As part of a wider campaign of hygiene management, the option to use a trusted external trainers and auditing organisation as an endorsement of your standards is one option to consider.

IACC Member Case Study: etc.venues have enlisted Navitas to provide training and auditing of their venues in London, UK in conjunction with their *Breath of Fresh Care* client commitment.



## EMBRACING YOUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 🏆

No matter where you are located in the world, one of the outcomes of this pandemic is the immense satisfaction and pride that is born from *playing your part*.

As venues welcome back their clients and attendees, everyone involved in meetings will consider they are still playing a part in the rebuilding of their community and society. As part of venues social responsibility efforts, making this connection is a true opportunity for their identity, brand and social connection.



NHS CHARITIES  
TOGETHER

IACC Member Case Study: De Vere Hotels in the UK: \*10% of direct guest room booking value including taxes will be paid to the National Health Services *Charities Together* program, supporting NHS staff and volunteers caring for Covid-19 patients.



### 3. SPACE UTILISATION

Space utilisation is a focus for operators at this time, as physical distancing calls for the re-design of meeting rooms, pre-function areas and social spaces. The reality of adhering to current distancing laws is resulting in spaces accommodating anything from 25% to 66% of usual capacity. This requires venues to balance carefully the pricing of spaces and services and the demand for space.

Venues should explore fully those layouts which optimise occupancy and adjust pricing to reflect these changes, especially when space is sold as a complete meeting package (CMP).

Clients will seek guidance from venues on new layouts which can respect physical distancing, but still achieve the learning or engagement outcomes for their meeting (see the Re-designing Spaces section of this guide for meeting room layouts).

Rooms with unique features such as multiple entry and exit points, will open up greater potential for managing the traffic flow of attendees and these spaces become premium spaces for this reason, in the eyes of clients.





## 4. PRICING MODELS

### COMPLETE MEETING PACKAGE (CMP) & DAY MEETING PACKAGE (DMP) 📁

When selling venue spaces as a *per person* package, it is important to recognise the now more significant occupancy differences between set ups. For instance, a 2,400sq.ft room could seat 28 in classroom set up, yet seats up to 48 using 72" rounds with 4 seats per table. CMP rates may be set in future, with different rates for different layouts.

### AL LA CARTE PRICING 💎

The balance between room hire revenue and food and beverage or other revenue is likely to require adjustment, as the food and beverage revenue opportunities may be reduced. For those properties operating F&B minimums, a decision needs to be made as to whether or how much these need adjusting. Especially with another

factor, of changing F&B items such as simplified menus come into operation.

### FACILITY FEES £

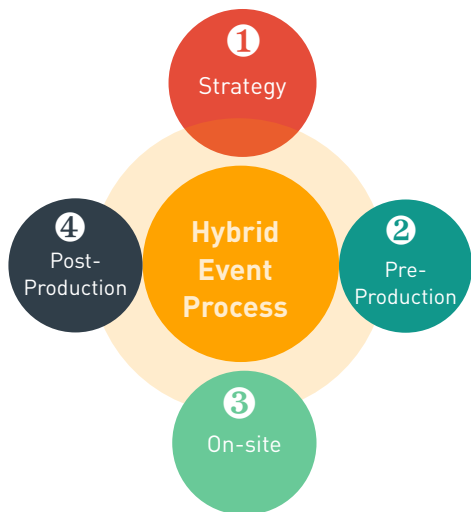
Another approach to recovering the hoped for temporary added costs for businesses, is a facility fee to help support the increase in costs of sanitation, disposable packaging and meeting client expectations regarding national and local regulations.

Approaches to applying fees to cover additional costs aside from a general price increase could be as follows:

- A percentage (%) of particular or all revenue streams (i.e. % of total meeting revenue or food & beverage revenue).
- Fixed cost per meeting attendee
- Fixed cost per occupied meeting room

## HYBRID MEETINGS & THE VIRTUAL ATTENDEE

There are two factors to consider here, the facilities suitability for incorporating hybrid meetings and the pricing for such a model. Many ask the question of how you can charge for a virtual attendee and the simple answer is that we need to change the model.



The suitability of the venue to host a hybrid meeting is influenced by a number of factors;

- Technology provided by the venue (AV, sound, lighting etc.).
- Staff knowledge and capability
- Venue internet infrastructure (bandwidth and reliability)
- Venues ability to provide registration services for virtual attendees

- Venues ability to provide tech support for virtual attendees
- Venues ability to provide clients with a webcast/video conference platform.

The more services and expertise a venue offers the virtual attendee, the easier it will be to attach value for the client and to price accordingly. This becomes more akin to a registration management fee, than the usual space or F&B related charges levied by venues.

## MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS

We can begin to predict some mid or even long-term changes to meetings, without the evidence being there. It is likely we will first see the return of smaller meetings, with attendees from one region. It is possible that the next stage will see larger meetings and conferences take on a multi-location/venue approach. This is where an event takes place over a number of venues at the same time, bringing these smaller regional groups together in a hybrid format, with virtual speakers and presenters.



## IACC MULTIPOD MEETINGS

Venues with the ability to embrace a MultiPOD meeting by offering venue management across more than one venue/location, would be well placed to win this type of business. Collaboration between IACC members globally is a powerful way to rise to this opportunity and in August IACC will be launching

### **IACC Associate Member Feature**

*Venue PMS/CRM software provider Ungerboeck incorporates registration software into their platform, offering registration interfaces to venues clients.*

IACC MultiPOD Meetings, where IACC venues pledge to support the required technology and collaboration platform needed for such meetings.

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and volunteers for their  
contributions.*



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