

How to Develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan



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Attendee safety should be at the top of the list of considerations for any live meeting or event. When moving forward with a COVID-19 era event, safety becomes even more of a critical consideration.

The first question to ask yourself, team and leadership is: Can we host this live meeting or event without the spread of infection? Emergency Concierge International suggests moving forward with your planning process with the focus on prevention and putting protocols in place that will accommodate even the most concerned traveler. This guide will get you started with your COVID-19 Safety Plan.

Define Meeting Sponsor's Position

Buy-in from leadership and stakeholders is the critical first step. Define the meeting sponsor's position on all considerations related to executing a COVID-era meeting. This should include aspects such as your mask wearing policy, physical distancing policy and levels of enforcement for both.

Additional considerations for the initial planning discussion:

- Who will be responsible for enforcement?
- Does enforcement put that person or team in a compromising position if you have issues with compliance?
- Are you comfortable asking attendees to leave for non-compliance?
- Will you conduct health screenings?
- Will you require proof of a negative test for entry?

- Will you provide on-site testing?
- Are you coordinating and offering contact tracing?
- What is your agreed upon plan and response for anyone reporting COVID or Flu like symptoms?

It is essential that everyone (including a leadership team) to support and follow the protocols put into place once on-site.

Pre-Event Registration Process

Once your team is in agreement on protocols and enforcement, you can now move into the registration process, which should include clear information about those protocols and enforcement. Attendees may choose not to attend based on the mitigation techniques. Your COVID-era pre-event registration process should include:

- A risk waiver (as advised by your legal counsel)
- An Attendee Code of Conduct agreement to adhere to protocols, including an understanding they will be asked to leave if they do not adhere to your protocols
- A detailed mask wearing policy, including enforcement and tolerance for attendees refusing to wear a mask
- Plan for response to anyone presenting symptoms
- Refund policy

- Any health screenings you will be conducting
- Information on required testing, if applicable
- If you will be conducting contact tracing and the details
- A reminder to not travel or attend if attendees are feeling ill, have COVID or flu-like symptoms, or have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID in the past 14 days. (Check the latest CDC recommendations as well as the local health guidelines for the destination.)

It's important to make sure this information is in plain sight and obvious, not hidden, and has an 'I Agree' option through the registration site.

Planning Process: Site Inspection & Agenda Review

Planning for all the details in your agenda will require a completely new lens. It's important to have patience with this process and different sets of eyes and perspectives. If you can't conduct a site visit in person, you will need access to someone at the hotel who can conduct a thorough virtual site inspection.

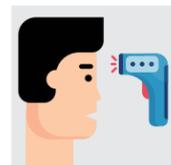
Whether you walk the space in person or virtually, analyze it for potential problems with bottlenecks (any area where attendees will get overly congregated, thus violating social distancing best practices).

Does the venue have elevators? How many people will fit in an elevator and how many people will need to use the elevators at the same time? Will your attendees be backed up or late to your meetings because of the elevator situation?

Review the number of attendees and determine how much space you will need to accommodate any queuing. Consider and plan for natural areas of congregation.

Here are some aspects to consider when reviewing your agenda:

Registration:



- If you are conducting any kind of health screening, where will you place it in relation to the registration desk?
- What can attendees expect from this screening process?
 - Questionnaire?
 - Designated stickers, wristbands, etc.

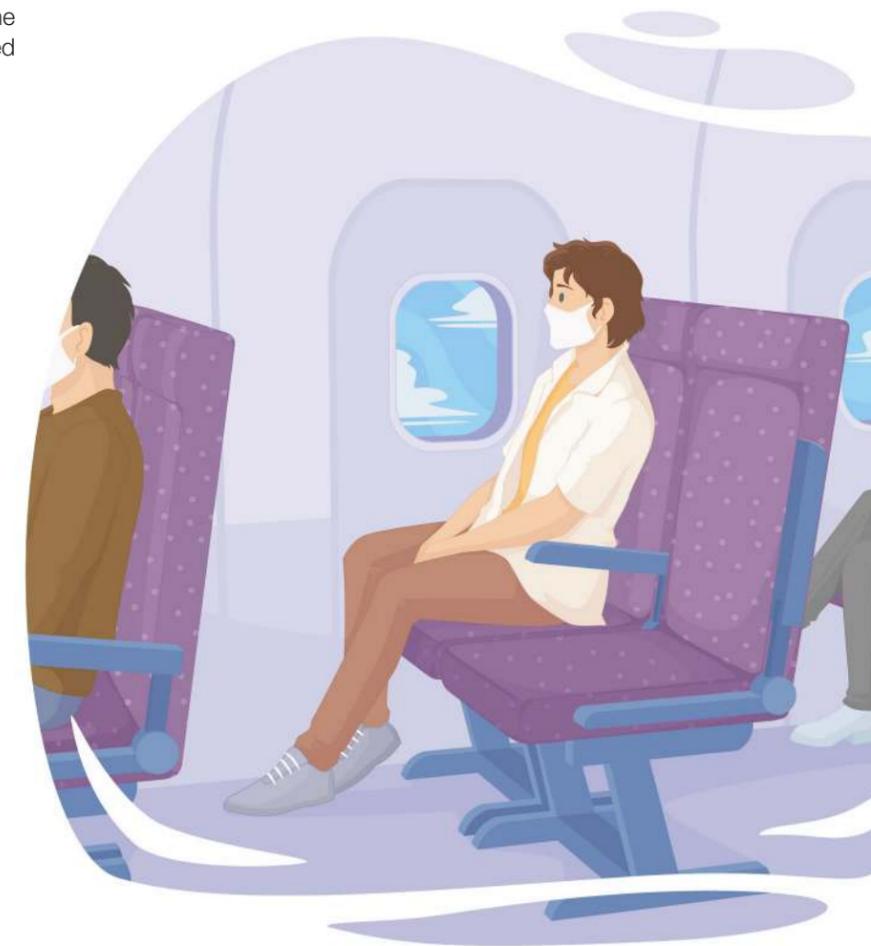
showing proof of passing the health screening?

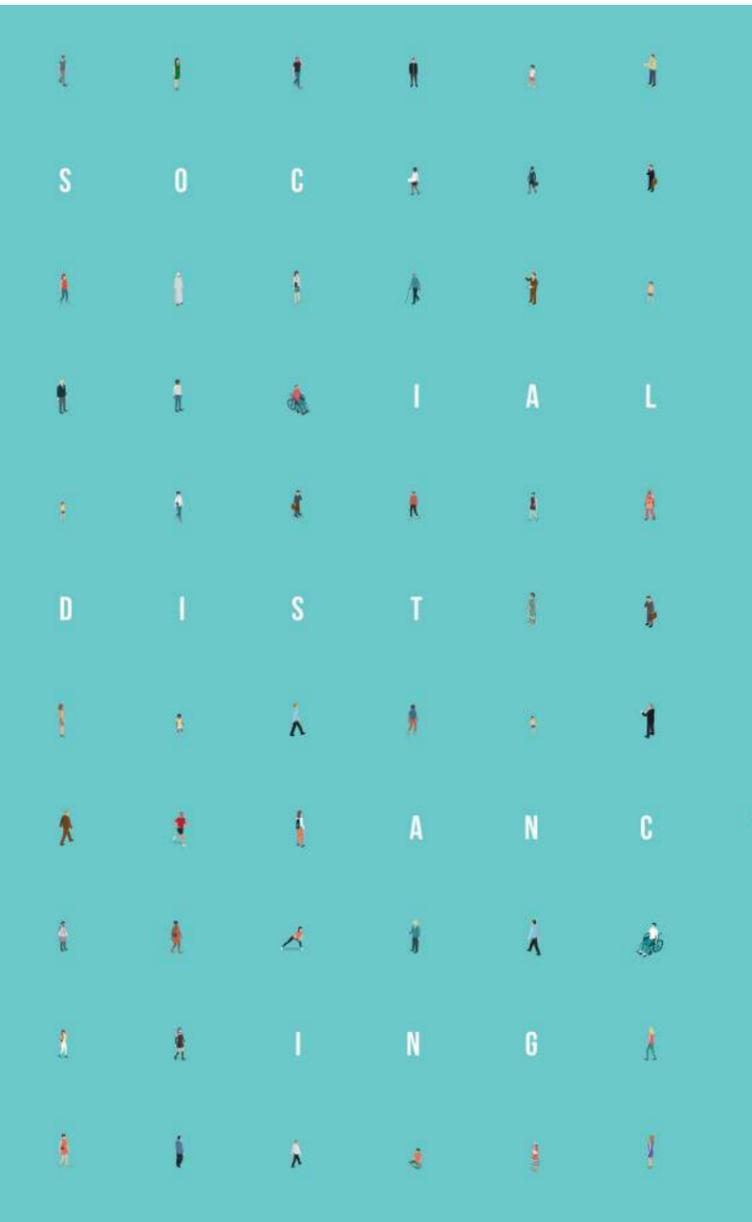
- Are you conducting temperature checks and how?
- In-person reminders of protocols and attendee accountability agreement?
- How many people do you have arriving and how can you stagger their arrivals to give everyone space?
- Does the venue have enough rope and stanchion to facilitate an appropriately distanced registration area, or do you need to look at rentals?
- Can you pre-set the opening general session with assigned seats and badges to reduce the traffic at a registration desk?

- Does it make sense for you to mail registration packets out before the conference?
- Are you conducting a contactless registration process? If not, what are you doing to provide a safe experience for your staff and your attendees (distance, sneeze guards, etc.)? Does the venue have in-house sneeze guards or will you need to procure?
- Is there enough space in your registration area to allow for people to maintain 6-foot distancing?
- Do not forget side-to-side distancing. Most people focus on front-to-back distancing and forget to arrange side-by-side distancing. Think of an offset stagger if multiple lines are involved.

Meetings:

- How are people going to get there and/or where are they coming from? What obstacles does that impose?
- Confirm appropriate capacity with your venue and ask for diagrams.
- All meeting sets should follow the 6-foot suggested distance.
- Consider assigned seats for meetings and F&B if it makes sense for your group.
- For larger meetings, you may want to assign zones or organize staggered entry/exit to minimize traffic flow in and out of a ballroom.
- Define specific entry-only and exit-only doors.





Venue Protocol Review

Many venues find themselves short-staffed due to the pandemic. It's important that both parties are honest and transparent with their potential limitations, budget concerns and expectations. Communicate effectively and have a proactive conversation about expectations, what success looks like to each of you, and initial concerns. Where have they fallen short with previous groups? What has been successful?

- Do they have a clean program for their venue specifically vs. the high-level marketing flyer from their corporate office?
- When was the last time they updated their cleaning program?
- Confirm their employee health screening process for employees.
- What are their cleaning protocols for the guest rooms and meeting space?
- What cleaning schedule will be followed during your event specifically and do you agree with the schedule?
- How often with high-touch areas be cleaned and can this be increased during your meeting?
- Consider creating a schedule or checklist of sanitization yourself to share with venue to keep everyone on the same page.
- What is the venue's mask policy, and will they help with your enforcement policy?
- Where do they have hand sanitizer stations placed and do you need to supplement?

Signage

Signage should be overdone. Attendees need constant reminders to wear their masks and to socially distance.

Work with your venue to determine what signage they have and then plan on supplementing.

- Do you need to secure additional 6-foot distancing floor decals?
- Protocols should be listed in as many locations as possible.
- The mask policy needs to be visible, especially in areas where you might expect non-compliance, such as receptions.
- Consider tabletop signs everywhere possible.
- Lollipop-style signs are a great option for planning staff to work the room with enforcement reminders.

Attendee Communications

It's extremely important to communicate effectively and frequently with your attendees. A communication schedule can be an effective tool, and should include the type of communication, when it's scheduled and the content:

- Pre-event emails
- Social Media
- Know Before You Go email
- Daily on-site emails
- Text messages
- Announcements
- Videos
- Add a protocol review to your general session or other sessions.

Remember that individuals consume information in different ways, so you will want to communicate often and through multiple mechanisms.

Crisis Control

What is the plan if someone becomes ill on site? This needs to be part of your COVID response plan. Consider the following:

- Taking care of your attendee should be a priority.
- Self-quarantining is extremely important.
- Review where the attendee has been in the venue and a plan for decontamination.
- Are you providing contact tracing and need to facilitate reporting a possible exposure to other attendees?
- Attendee privacy is critical.
- Will you facilitate a testing process for your attendees either on site or nearby?
- What is the hotel's policy for someone reporting symptoms or testing positive?
- Will they offer a discount or comp rooms for an attendee to quarantine for 14 days or as needed?
- How can you support your attendee who is feeling ill while keeping your planning staff safe?
- Has the exposure been so significant that the event should be cancelled?

Conclusion:

Despite all your planning, know that you may need to make real-time adjustments. Keep in mind that for many attendees, your meeting or event may be the first they're attending in the COVID era. By thorough planning and enforcement, you will be able to execute a meeting or event without contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

About ECI

Today's threats require a higher-level strategic approach from experienced, real-world operators that are dedicated to the specific needs of an "All-Hazard" environment. Emergency Concierge International (ECI) is an All-Hazards Emergency Planning & Management company for meetings and events. At ECI we pride ourselves on providing the highest level of customer service, thorough analysis and an all-inclusive subject matter expertise. Our evaluations, plans and solutions are real world-based, fiscally responsible and actionable. The team at ECI brings over 75 years of combined emergency response experience, including response to infectious diseases, plus 20 years of hospitality industry experience. This allows the team at ECI to bridge the gap for the meetings and events industry.

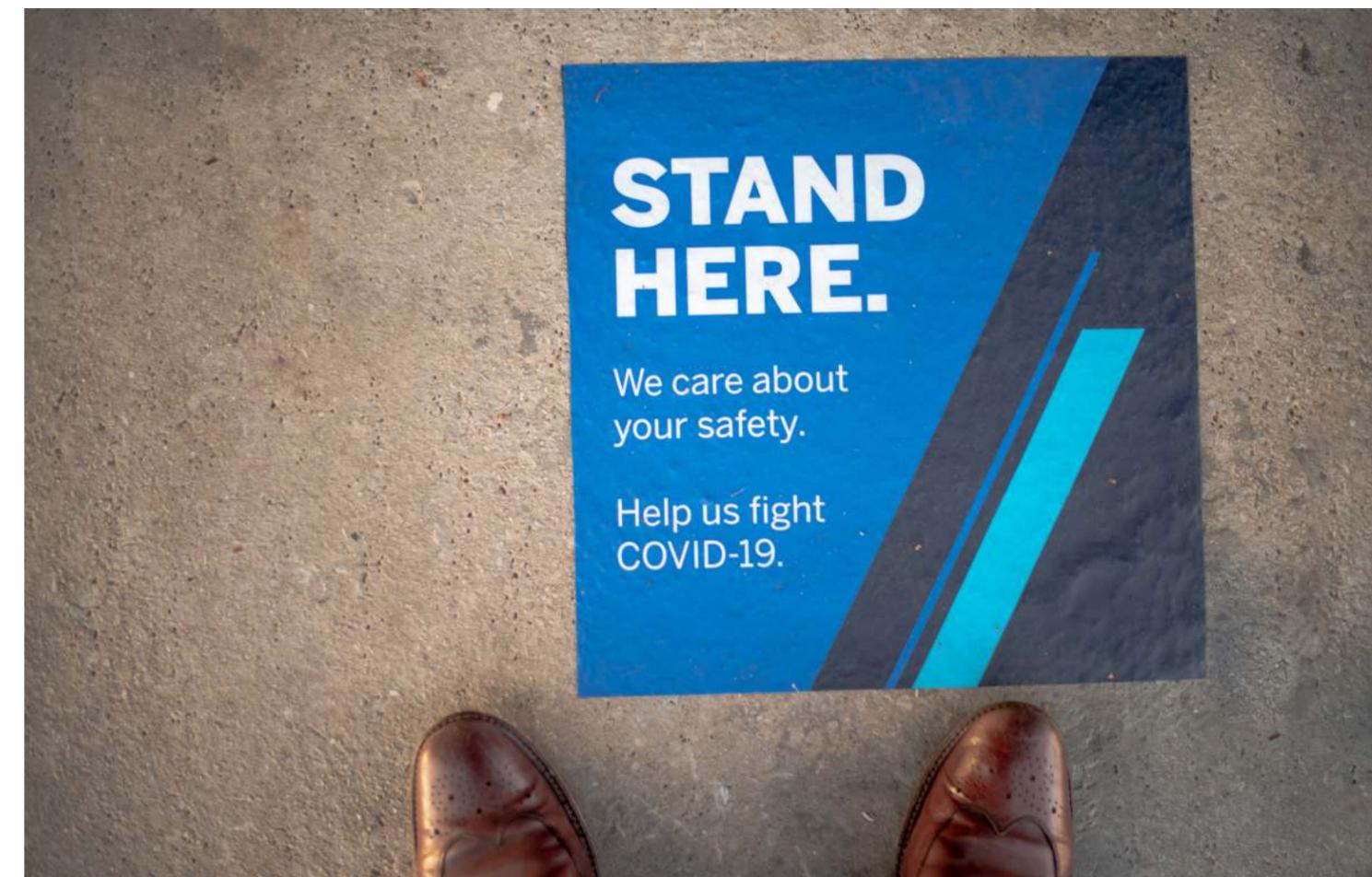
Learn more at <https://emergencyconcierge.net/>

ECI Disclaimer

We are not lawyers. Seek counsel from your legal team as needed.

F&B Functions:

- Work with your venue to determine the best creative solutions for your group.
- Can the venue facilitate enclosed plated meals?
- Are you comfortable with a buffet if the hotel has sneeze guards and is served by an attendant?
- What are their solutions for breaks?
- If you are including any self-serve items, sanitizing wipes need to be provided.
- Provide for attendees to have the option of being seated solo.
- If you are serving a meal, have your mask policy clearly defined at each table.
- Receptions can be tricky to execute and maintain proper masking. Consider seated receptions or scheduled micro-networking.
- What solutions can you offer for attendees who are not comfortable being without their mask at a F&B function (such as a way to engage from their rooms).





While venues may look the same here in Charlotte, the world has certainly changed. Because of that, health and safety measures in the Queen City have evolved to meet the demands of this challenging time to ensure that planners and attendees will have sound peace of mind and visibly see the commitment being made to maintaining exceptional, health-conscious conditions. Over the last several months, Charlotte has been busy rewriting protocols to a standard called “We Clean With Care.” In addition to an exhaustive list of rigorous facility processes that have been implemented, the Charlotte Convention Center has received its Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC) STAR™ Facility Accreditation, making it one of the first facilities in North Carolina to earn this distinction.

Often utilized as a proactive measure in hospital settings, the center has also integrated needlepoint bipolar ionization (NPBI) air purification technologies into its HVAC systems as another layer of protection to eliminate and neutralize disease-causing pathogens such as COVID-19. Other best practices include utilizing electrostatic spraying in between events, linen-less meetings table sets and no contact food and beverage protocols.

New in 2021, a \$127 million expansion to the center is set to be completed. As conventions and events begin to return, they will soon benefit from an additional 50,000 square feet of meeting room and pre-function space, bringing the total square footage to approximately 600,000.

Delivering memorable experiences in Charlotte is in the DNA of the city's welcoming tourism community. And in these uncertain times, that means placing health and safety of the attendees and millions of visitors who travel to the Queen City as the highest priority.

About Charlotte

In Charlotte, North Carolina, discover a meeting and convention destination that blends a compact, walkable district with vibrant amenities in an ever-evolving cityscape. A new \$127 million convention center expansion, the nation's sixth busiest airport, and unique hotel properties invite planners to explore this dynamic meetings hub in the Southeast.

charlottemeetings.com



SOUTH CAROLINA

Since the onset of the pandemic, Kiawah Island Golf Resort has taken an enhanced approach to protect the health and safety of all groups, guests and staff on-property. Specific measures include:

Expert Partnership

Professionals from the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) serve as an advisory council to ensure guest and staff well-being. This commitment includes increasing and monitoring already stringent policies regarding sanitization procedures, frequency of cleaning and food safety throughout the Resort.

Compliance at Every Level

Kiawah Island Golf Resort adheres to protocols set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), the South Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association (SCLRA) and the town of Kiawah Island.

Reimagined Group Dining

The F&B team has implemented a comprehensive plan to ensure attendee safety. This plan covers every detail—including sanitization of high-touch surfaces, daily health screenings of catering staff, room and service setups, social distancing and capacity limitations.

Outdoor Spaces

Kiawah Island is a beautiful nature preserve boasting a number of open-air spaces that can be customized for unique outdoor group gatherings and team-building activities.

Hybrid Meeting Support

The conference service team has developed a meeting package to provide all necessary tools and support to deliver live meeting content and one-of-a kind experiences, such as a chef's table, to virtual attendees.

Kiawah Island Golf Resort's group sales team works hand-in-hand with meeting planners to customize and ensure all on-site conference offerings fulfill each organization's COVID-19 safety plan.

About Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Kiawah Island Golf Resort is the ideal destination for meetings in coastal South Carolina. Private Villa accommodations, pristine indoor and open-air group venues and a fully reimagined F&B program keep attendee comfort top-of-mind. Your group will enjoy these amenities in secluded natural surroundings for an exceptional off-site experience.

kiawahresort.com/meetings



[youtube.com/c/KiawahIslandGolfResort/videos](https://www.youtube.com/c/KiawahIslandGolfResort/videos)



MGM RESORTS

At MGM Resorts, every step we take toward a healthier, safer meeting experience is an important one. That's why we partnered with a team of experts to create our Health and Safety Protocols guide. This helpful resource contains specific, actionable and practical information that puts safety at the heart of our operations. Due to the potential risk of COVID-19, we have added additional cleaning standards beyond our general cleaning practices. From increasing cleaning schedules of common areas in both public areas and back of the house to paying special attention to high-contact areas such as doorknobs and food contact surfaces, we've taken every step necessary to help ensure the health and safety of all guests and employees.

We are committed to earning the confidence of both meeting and event planners, and attendees by addressing their most important concerns and needs. We are also pioneering a COVID-19 pilot testing protocol with some of the most cutting-edge companies, so that if you choose, you can create a safe perimeter around your event. When we say that we want you to Convene with Confidence, we really mean it. We also have carefully planned out various options that will help keep your attendees safe, while giving you the flexibility and creativity you are accustomed to. As always, our convention teams will work with you on the various options available for your event.

"We look forward to seeing you at an MGM Resorts property soon."

About MGM Resorts

From the fountains of Bellagio to the iconic boxing ring at MGM Grand, to the award-winning chef line up at Aria, MGM Resorts has created some of the world's most iconic entertainment destinations in Las Vegas.

Because we have one goal: to entertain the human race. Visit mgmresorts.com to learn more.



TOP 5 BEST SMALL CITY IN THE U.S.
Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards, 2020

During this challenging period, site selection considerations are more important than ever. Visit Alexandria has developed a Meeting Planner's Destination Checklist as a free resource to ensure that all your bases are covered when evaluating a destination and communicating with a DMO or CVB.

Visit Alexandria is at-the-ready to be your main liaison with local hotels to manage flexible contracts and find creative solutions amidst COVID-19. The City of Alexandria proudly boasts a strong community partnership and a dedication to customer service and well-being, so meeting planners and attendees alike are assured they are meeting in a safe and welcoming environment. Book your next meeting in Alexandria, and take advantage of:

- Community-wide ALX Promise commitment to high safety standards during COVID-19
- Hotels ranging from four-star boutiques to a full-service convention property practicing physical distancing and implementing enhanced cleaning protocols
- Outdoor meeting and event spaces for safe events and activities
- Streaming and audiovisual resources allowing for seamless hybrid meeting solutions
- Virtual tours and experience library for remote site visits and meeting attendee engagement
- Three nationally recognized institutes of The Leadership Collection at Alexandria™
- Tips on navigating the city with ease by train, airport, Metro, bus or foot.
- Complimentary concierge service to help you find creative solutions in this environment, with a specialization in small to midsize meetings

Learn more at Visit Alexandria's one-stop COVID-19 resources landing page, which includes state and city regulations, safety protocols for businesses and hotels, opening status for businesses and attractions, pandemic marketing tools and more.

About Alexandria, VA

Just five miles from Washington D.C., Alexandria, Virginia is the perfect spot for small to midsize meetings. Named a Top 5 Best Small City in the U.S. 2020 by Condé Nast Traveler, Alexandria offers a relaxed, walkable setting with a small town feel and the amenities of a cosmopolitan city.

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