COVID-19 Key Messages

- Meeting professionals are adaptive and are passionate about our connection as a global community.
- Following the guidance of the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, our focus is providing resources that help provide solutions for our industry and those we serve.
- This industry is resilient. We have dealt with challenges like this in the past. We will deal with this challenge, too.
- We help support people and communities in ways that have a lasting impact – and that will continue.

Questions and Answers

Q: What is the financial imprint of the events/exhibitions industry?
   A: The global business events industry contributed $1.5 trillion USD to global GDP in 2017. We support more than 10.3 million direct and 25.9 million indirect jobs worldwide.

Q: Do you know how much the industry is losing already due to COVID-19?
   A: The numbers we know for a fact are that the global business events industry contributed $1.5 trillion USD to global GDP in 2017. We support more than 10.3 million direct and 25.9 million indirect jobs worldwide.

   We will not speculate on the long-term impact of COVID-19 until we have the data. We typically would not know until the second or even third quarter for example, the economic impact of an event that happens in the first quarter. Therefore, it will be a while before we have that data.

Q: But, you already seeing a negative impact?
   A: We have seen an impact to events that have cancelled, and to restrictions on travel and mobility as mandated by the WHO, CDC and individual countries.

Q: What do you expect to happen in the industry?
   A: Meeting professionals are adaptive and rely on fact. We will continue to be a source of – and advocate for – factual, measured information for the industry. We are connected and are collaborating on how to work in the best interest of attendees, suppliers and local communities.

Q: How will the industry recover from this?
   A: Our industry has weathered disruptions in the past and will weather this as well. We encourage everyone to follow the facts. Our industry partners are sharing resources and tools and will make decisions based on facts. When we can evaluate the long-term impact, we will. Right now, we are focused on how to best serve the global community.
Q: Some significant events have already been cancelled. Can you quantify those cancellations?
A: ICCA is actively measuring cancellations and postponements of association meetings. They are already putting out the data for Asia. It shows that the majority of events are taking place even though there have been some high-profile cancellations. You can go to their site at https://www.iccaworld.org/npps/story.cfm?nppage=2368984 for fact based information.

Q: How do event organizers/meeting planners prepare for a disruption like this?
A: Meeting professionals are adaptive and solutions oriented – they are focused on their events, attendees and suppliers. They deal with all kind of disruptions on any given day. In this case, meeting professional will have their plans and teams in place, ensure documents are up to date so they know and can communicate cancellation policies and rely on insurance provisions.

Q: As we see event cancellations, will those events ever happen or return?
A: Meeting professionals will look at all of their options and find a solution. Each event is unique. But, just like other major disruptions in the past (9-11, Great Recession, SARS), events that are cancelled now will likely return when this health emergency passes.

Q: What do you recommend to event organizers?
A: Empathy, compassion and commitment to be resilient is the best resource we can offer our global community at this juncture. Maintain perspective. Make an informed decision. Rely on facts. Remember that this is a rapidly changing situation. Over communicate with your audience. Work together as an industry and be flexible.

Q: What do you recommend to event attendees or exhibitors or vendors?
A: Make an informed decision about participation in events by seeking information from reliable sources and in consideration of your specific circumstances.

Q: Are the airlines and hotels – who are each facing their own losses – going to cooperate and help address the hardship on travelers and event organizers/hosts?
A: I can’t speak for other industries. But, I can say that event planners are in touch with their suppliers and partners to adapt as needed for their specific event.

Q: What other obstacles are your members facing from COVID-19?
A: Products and supplies are sourced from all over the world. Some suppliers may not be operating or may experience delays. If a company cannot participate in an event, they will need to find other ways to promote their sales or products. It’s also very important to our members that information be factual.

Q: Is this impacting any specific events for your organization?
A: The Events Industry Council is monitoring the situation and will follow the guidance of the WHO and CDC. At this time, none of our events are impacted.

Q: Will event organizers have masks and other precautions in place to help prevent the spread of any illness?
A: Each meeting professional will make his or her own plans for precautions following the basic guidance found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public
Q: What do you advise members to do if there is any outbreak at an event?
A: We advise members to follow WHO’s guidance. They have issued advice for events. You can find that here: https://www.who.int/publications-detail/key-planning-recommendations-for-mass-gatherings-in-the-context-of-the-current-covid-19-outbreak

Q: This virus clearly spreads by exposure. Isn’t it just best to tell people to stay home until this passes?
A: We understand the concerns and the fear of uncertainty. That is why we follow the guidance of the WHO and CDC. We will prepare and plan accordingly. Here are several resources that help better understand the disease, how it spreads, and the myths related to it:


Q: What do you say to the local communities that don’t want visitors – that don’t want conventions and meetings in their town while this is going on?
A: We are passionate about and care deeply for our global community. When we meet, we build and support communities creating a lasting legacy. Our focus right now is to follow the guidance of the WHO and CDC and to prepare and react per those guidelines. We are working with the facts and will continue to do so.