

## KEY MESSAGES

The science confirms that it is possible to safely resume large in-person professional meetings and events (PMEs). The following messages cover all the key points to educate and influence the CDC, public health and state officials, and business leaders on the critical importance of accelerating the return of large meetings, events and conventions across all jurisdictions.

Please use these messages in your own community outreach, particularly if you reside in a state or area where large gathering limitations still exist.

These messages are carried through in our social guide, media guide, fact sheets and more. We encourage you to visit the [Let's Meet There Action Center](#) for additional downloadable resources.

### Main Messages

- The science confirms that it is possible to safely resume in-person professional meetings and events (PMEs).
- The travel industry - particularly the meetings and events sector - was disproportionately impacted by the severe economic disruption of the pandemic.
- According to an analysis by the Ohio State University (OSU), PMEs have “the advantage of being structured and well-organized large gatherings where mitigation factors can be enforced to protect the health and safety of those in attendance.”
- OSU’s analysis confirms that PMEs “have not been super-spreader events.”
- **In fact, according to scientific modeling by the Exhibitions and Conferences Alliance and Epistemix, in-person PMEs pose a near-zero (0.001%) risk of COVID-19 transmission to attendees—even for large events.**
- As more and more people get vaccinated, the risk of transmission is further diminished.
- That’s why the CDC, as well as state and local governments, need to update their guidelines to reflect these facts in relation to PMEs. As stated in the OSU study, “a reevaluation of risk mitigation measures is warranted to ensure the public health response to the pandemic continues to be relevant to the conditions on the ground.”
- In-person PMEs are currently being held in the locations that are acknowledging these facts. States and cities that have yet to align their regulations with the current science are missing out and ultimately hurting their communities.
- **On average, COVID-19 restrictions cost states \$5.3 billion in 2020.** In total, the U.S. saw a decline of \$211 billion last year in direct spending generated from business travel (of which \$97 billion was directly due to declines in meetings and events), leading to the loss of nearly 1.5 million direct jobs and almost \$30 billion in tax revenue.
- And businesses that stick with restrictive travel policies are also missing out on jump-starting their own recovery. Virtual meetings and events can’t provide the same type of interactive and relational opportunities that come from in-person meetings and events.

- PMEs are employing many of the risk-mitigation measures outlined in the OSU white paper—including (1) pre-event health checks, (2) improved ventilation measures, (3) proactive steps to avoid overcrowding, (4) the appropriate use of facial coverings, (5) pandemic-curated food and beverage services, and (6) rapid response plans to manage any potential illness.
- OSU’s analysis concludes that this layered approach to risk mitigation reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission and increases the health and safety of all attendees, including those staffing the event.
- We know far more about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 than we did at the start of the pandemic, but state, local and federal health guidelines have not kept up. We’re asking the CDC to update guidance on “large gatherings” to carve out professional meetings and events, using the framework of this analysis, in order to create a baseline roadmap for their swift return.

***The CDC should start by more precisely distinguishing PMEs by definition from other “large gatherings.”***

## Key Economic Messages

- The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated Professional Meetings and Events (PMEs). Not only do large events drive human value—but they also drive significant economic value.
- This once-powerful travel industry segment and major economic driver has seen a staggering 76% decline in direct travel spending in the U.S. alone since the start of the pandemic.
  - 2020 saw a decline of \$97 billion in direct spending generated by the meetings, conventions and trade show industry. This spending is not projected to recover back to pre-pandemic levels until 2024 or 2025, based on the latest U.S. Travel Forecast.
  - COVID-19 restrictions resulted in nearly 1.5 million fewer direct travel jobs and a nearly \$30 billion loss in travel-generated taxes in 2020 due to the decline in total business travel.
- **A return to a thriving travel industry—and American economy—is dependent on the return of business travel and PMEs.**
- With many state and local gathering restrictions persisting despite improved conditions on the ground, and many companies reluctant to resume business travel, this once thriving segment of the travel industry is being denied the opportunity to recover, putting millions of jobs in further jeopardy.
- The economic case for a safe and immediate return to PMEs is clear. Bottom line: To get business back, we must get back to business.

***It’s time to lift the remaining restrictions on PMEs and start traveling again. Our economy depends on it.***

## Key Business Messages

- In-person meetings and events are safe to resume and good for business.
- Virtual meetings and events cannot provide the same type of interactive and relational opportunities that come from in-person meetings and events.
- In-person meetings and events are happening now in a healthy and safe way, providing significant benefits to attendees—including deeper connections to business contacts, education and training opportunities, access to key information through informal conversations, and improved company morale and job fulfillment.
- **The vast majority of business travelers are actually looking forward to getting back on the road and less than one in 10 are unwilling to travel.**

- **And more than four in five decision makers believe business travel leads to increased profit and revenue.<sup>1</sup>**
- According to the Ohio State University (OSU) study, PMEs have “the advantage of being structured and well-organized large gatherings where mitigation factors can be enforced to protect the health and safety of those in attendance.”
- OSU’s analysis confirms that PMEs “have not been super-spreader events.”
- In fact, according to scientific modeling by the Exhibitions and Conferences Alliance and Epistemix, in-person PMEs pose a near-zero (0.001%) risk of COVID-19 transmission to attendees—even for large events.
- PMEs are employing several risk-mitigation measures—including (1) pre-event health checks, (2) improved ventilation measures, (3) proactive steps to avoid overcrowding, (4) the appropriate use of facial coverings, (5) pandemic-curated food and beverage services, and (6) rapid response plans to manage any potential illness.
- According to the OSU paper, this layered approach to risk mitigation reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission and increases the health and safety of all attendees, including those staffing the event.

***The time is now to resume travel to in-person meetings and events. It is safe to do so, and good for business.***

1. American Express Global Business Travel, Back to Blue Skies, May 20, 2021