



WORKING TOGETHER:

HOW the Live Event & Meeting Industry Will Be the KEY to Alberta Economic Recovery

The Alberta Live Events industry has been decimated by COVID-19. It is the sector that was the first to close and will likely be the last to reopen fully.

- Thousands of people are out of work from small, medium and large event organizations.
- **With venue capacities set at a bare minimum or closed outright**, many of those companies **will not survive in 2021**.
- The event industry has lost an average of 75% of their revenue due to COVID-19.
- The event industry has lost over \$350 million in revenue due to COVID-19
- The professionals involved in the construction of a live event, cannot generate enough revenue for their businesses **with the strict restrictions on gathering numbers in place**.
- Warehouses stand full and idle – yet still incur overhead.
- Our industry needs a runway of time. Events take many weeks, months and sometimes years to coordinate.
- We are looking at a second year in a row without revenue if we don't create a re-launch timeline together.
- With verbiage given to the public like re-launch and re-open it is ignoring that events over 100 people have been CLOSED for a full year and counting.
- Without a plan in place more businesses will go bankrupt and billions of dollars will be left out of the Alberta economy.

Live events are not the same as mass gatherings. They are not uncontrolled like a shopping mall, a big box store, or a weekend gathering of friends. **Professionally managed events, in a controlled environment and with adherence to reasonable guidelines, present one of the safest environments for people to meet face-to-face.**

Live events such as conferences, trade shows, and live entertainment are people-based businesses that rely on the creation of emotional experiences and human interactions. In Canada, live events stimulate 1/3 of tourism activity, sustain 229,000 direct jobs, and generate \$33B in direct spending, with \$19B contributing to Canada's annual GDP*. The impact of live events runs deeply into the economy. Each of our key industries in Alberta rely on live events to inform investors, transact business and engage with opportunities to export and expand their businesses. This creates jobs in industries including Government, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Transportation, Aerospace, Forestry, Technology, and all emerging sectors of the Alberta. These same industry sectors that will drive the recovery of our economy. COVID-19 has perilously impacted thousands of small, medium and large event organizers, venues and associated contractors.



Who is the Alberta Live Events Coalition (ALEC)?

The Alberta Live Events Coalition began as a task force on March 20, 2020 to discuss best practices for staging live events in a safe manner. We have developed a set of best practices and guidelines, and are advocating for the event industry with municipal and provincial Government officials to ensure they understand that event professionals can both produce live events in a safe manner and are a major contributor to the economy.

ALEC was founded to represent event professionals in Alberta who work in all areas of the live event & meeting industry: conferences, fundraisers, sports, festivals, concerts, rodeos, weddings, rental and audio-visual companies, venues and hotels, and many others. We have created a set of best practices to be reviewed by all levels of Government and have FOUR PRIMARY GOALS:

1. Advocate for the event industry
2. Increase venue capacities and gathering numbers in alignment with case numbers, positivity rates, R value and hospitalization numbers.
3. Educate government and public on who and what a professionally trained, experienced & educated event manager/planner/producer is and why it is SO important to hire one to run events during this time;
4. Work with media and government to ease public fear around meeting and attending live events – promoting mental health benefits of meeting safely in-person.

Our industry has been working hard on a safe re-launch plan and would love the opportunity to meet with all levels of Government to discuss how we can all work together going forward.

The Economic Impact:

At the request of the Provincial Government and Alberta Health Services, The Alberta Live Events Coalition created an industry specific survey to collect real-time data on the devastating financial and unemployment effects COVID-19 has had on the Live Events & Meeting Industry here in Alberta. This survey was sent out on January 21st and closed on January 29th. Over 165 Event Professionals from across the Province completed the survey anonymously. The results are below:

Current Situation in Alberta:

One single event in Alberta can provide work for hundreds of people. It takes thousands of events to be taking place in the province to provide full time work for the many people working in the events industry. If an event can shift to virtual it takes only a small portion of the number of people to produce and brings in a fraction of the revenue. ALEC reached out to the event industry in Alberta to obtain current information on the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses. 167 organizations replied and this is what we found:



Events Lost in Alberta in 2020: 19,045

Pre-covid revenue for event-based businesses: \$312,689,750.00

2020 revenue for event-based businesses: \$80,024,320.00

Revenue LOST due to Covid: \$353,900,151.00

Jobs LOST due to Covid: 5544+

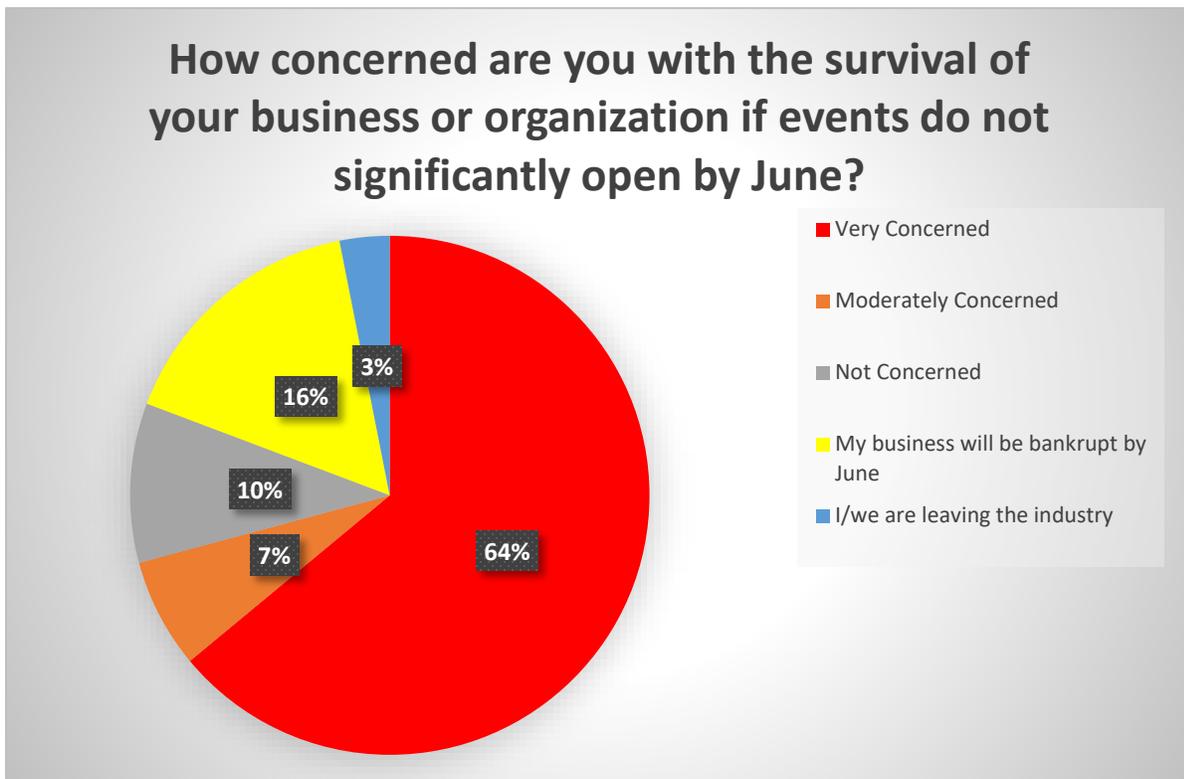
The event industry represents a wide range of salaries from minimum wage employees, to full time staffing making over \$200,000/year.

Government Support Required:

Along with the other hardest hit industries (tourism, hospitality, performing arts) we have been encouraged by the government's commitment to expand the Small & Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant. However, this has been of little comfort to those in the events industry whose businesses have been constrained by restrictions for over 12 months and who have had an average of 75% reduction in revenue.

The events industry is desperate. We recognize the importance of working together to keep everyone safe but the absence of a predictive path forward is quickly accelerating the odds of business failure and threatens to undermine the core capacity of the event industry in Alberta.

ALEC requests that the Government of Alberta immediately commit to enhancing the Small & Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant (SMERG) to include a dedicated event industry stream that doubles or triples the grant and increases the eligibility threshold to no less than 30% of a business's pre-COVID revenue.



ALEC welcomes the opportunity to engage regularly with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and her team to develop a strategy for the event industry to open safely and with similar considerations as other industries.

WHAT THE LIVE EVENTS INDUSTRY IS ASKING FOR:

1. Permit the event industry to plan safe events in restricted numbers, within **household** groupings, and with all required risk mitigation measures in place and to do so in a safe and controlled manner. We ask that these events be allowed with the same gathering restrictions as restaurants, retail and places of worship.
2. Permit meeting and event venues to reopen with restricted limits of individuals, based on capacity and with strong risk mitigation measures in place and to do so in a safe and controlled manner. We ask that these events be allowed with the same capacity restrictions as restaurants, retail and places of worship.
3. Government to work closely with the event industry to plan for appropriate and consistent expansion of event capacities as case rates and vaccination rates progress. We recommend that as restrictions ease for restaurants, places of worship and retail capacities expand, that they also expand for live events.



4. Base indoor gathering size on square footage of space available and overall capacity *instead of group size*, beginning with 15% and making our way to 100%.

5. Acknowledge the difference in the transmission rates between indoor social gatherings at homes and professionally produced events.

6. Clarify and eliminate overlap of guidelines which allow some events to open while others remain closed (i.e., designating an indoor light festival as “retail” and allowing it to follow retail rules while keeping other indoor events closed; or allowing some meetings to occur based on their industry (merchandising) while others are not.

7. Increase financial support for the event industry as event restrictions remain in place and prevent organizations from conducting business. Dedicate a stream of support for the events industry as one of the hardest hit industries.

Commit to a plan of re-opening for the event industry that is tapered, stringent and methodical, with reopening plans based on science and common sense, with a vision to fully re-open in 2021.

The Alberta Live Events Coalition wishes to be a partner with the Government of Alberta to not only get events re-opening safely but to become a leader in the country in how events are regulated and managed. To do this we suggest meeting to discuss funding options and timelines.

Timeline:

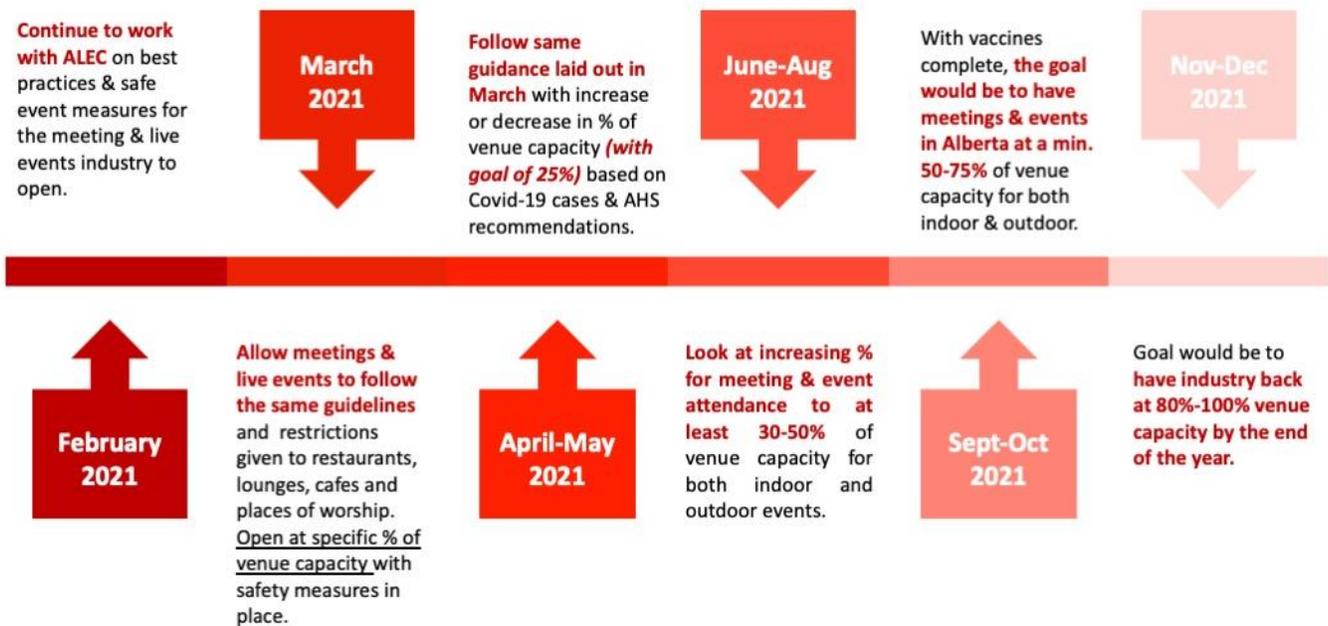
As previously discussed, **the Meeting & Live Events Industry requires a runway of time to enact a successful safe re-opening.** *An event for even a small group of 100 does not take place without significant planning. The industry is struggling as events have been cancelled for 2021 Q1 and Q2 already as groups are not willing to financially risk waiting to find out if their event can happen. Without a solid plan in place soon, the events in Q3 and Q4 will also cancel, causing further financial losses. At this point we are trying to save 2021 Christmas parties and the suppliers who lost millions with the cancellations in 2020.*

What does a **Runway of Time** look like? The Alberta Live Events Coalition recommends following the same opening restrictions as restaurants, places of worship and retail. In past months, our industry has been restricted to a specific number of guests that are allowed to gather regardless of capacity (e.g. 50 people for indoor events, 100 for theatre or seated events) – so, 50 people could meet in in either 600 square feet or 10,000 square feet. *We propose that events are based on a percentage of square footage of the venue rather than a specific number. To continue restricting to an overall cap in numbers will mean the demise of our industry in 2021.*



Currently, places of Worship are allowed up to 15% of capacity to attend service on a weekly basis. The meeting & live events industry is asking to be treated with the same level of trust you have allowed non-event professionals to gather in.

Suggested Timeline for Runway Needed for our Industry to Open:



ALEC Recommendations for Live Events to be included in the Path Forward:

Events are not all equal. We recognize that there are different levels of risk depending on if the event is indoors or outdoors, with the amount of alcohol available, whether or not there is singing or dancing, the ability to stay in household cohorts, how close participants get, etc. We wish to continue to work with the governments and provincial health regulators to set guidelines for event professionals and venues to ensure safe events. Ultimately, **we know that events that are professionally managed, in controlled environments, with reasonable restrictions, pose no bigger risk than people eating and drinking in a bar or restaurant or shopping in a grocery store.**

The following recommendations are based on the same timelines set out in the Path Forward document provided by the Alberta Government. In conjunction with potential easing of restrictions and the re-opening of banquet halls, conference centres and hotels, we recommend that live events be permitted in Step Two, following the same guidelines:



Gatherings with no food and beverage component be allowed with the SAME restrictions as places of worship:

- Groups seated within their households
- 6' distance between household groups
- Masks required at all times
- 15% of venue capacity
- Vocal and choral performances allowed with physical distancing and masks worn at all times

Gatherings with food and beverage be allowed with the SAME restrictions as restaurants AND places of worship:

- Maximum of 6 people per table; individuals must be from same household or the two close contacts for people living alone
- Contact information collected
- Liquor service ends at 10 pm
- No entertainment allowed
- 6' distance between household groups
- Masks required at all times (when not eating or drinking)
- 15% of venue capacity

Additional risk management strategies that event professionals MUST put into place:

- Control traffic flow into and out of venues to limit lineups, large group interactions and intermingling of household groups
- Physical distancing requirements in place at all times
- Contact tracing in place
- Codes of conduct in place for all attendees
- Communicate with attendees on safety precautions in place, new developments related to COVID-19 and their role in working together to keep the event safe for all attendees
- Signage related to COVID-19 posted throughout the event area
- All attendees must follow current CMOH guidelines regarding quarantine and isolation

As we move through the steps of the Path Forward we ask for **easement of additional restrictions** such as:

- Increasing percentage of venue capacity
- Increasing numbers of people who can gather outside of household groups
- Increase entertainment options



We are seeking the same, controlled and professionally implemented permissions granted to restaurants, airlines, churches, shopping malls, schools, salons, and previously to trade shows, exhibiting events, and movie theatres.

We are recommending that health officials allow live events beginning in Step Two to take place with the following limitations:

- Capacity limited to a percentage of the occupancy limits of established venues
- Household or organizational cohorts required until restrictions eased as outlined in the path forward
- Limitations on time of service for food and alcohol
- Physical distancing requirements in place
- Entrances and exits and flow of traffic coordinated to allow for distancing at all times
- Masks required indoors when not eating and drinking
- Contact tracing in place
- Codes of conduct in place for all attendees
- Professional event managers hired to ensure adherence to all guidelines

HOW THE LIVE EVENTS INDUSTRY SUPPORTS OTHER INDUSTRIES:

The event industry is essential to, and impacts a multitude of other industries, some examples:

- The animal rescue who normally raises \$100,000/year via a gala, that's struggling with double the volume and only \$35,000 in virtual event funding.
- The fundraising events for autistic children, education programs for the vulnerable, women's shelters, food banks, crisis centres all of which are experiencing a huge increase in volume this year, and a proportionate decrease in funding due to canceled events.
- The associations in a wide variety of industries – agriculture, forestry, health, energy, manufacturing and so on, whose conferences are their second largest source of annual revenue outside of membership dues.
- The corporation who relies on safety meetings and conferences to relay critical information to employees and contractors.

An intangible benefit to industry supporting events is the opportunity for networking and business development at those events that help bond and strengthen trust and unity – a connection that emails and phone calls can never achieve. When you bring an out-of-town visitor to an event, they spend 4 times the dollar amount that an attending local spends at the same event. **A small 900-person medical conference held over 4 days contributes \$1.2 million to the local economy – including restaurants, transportation, and retail.**



EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EVENTS:

Much like tourism, the live events industry, could be said to be an industry of industries. Tourism Calgary estimates a \$75 million-dollar economic loss from the cancellation of events booking in Calgary due to COVID-19. And that's just Calgary and events that are booked within their system! Here is a look at the employment and economic impact of a few events:

A single three-day conference for 500 attendees can employ the following:

- Event producing company: 2
- Client staff dedicated to event: 3
- Audio Visual Technicians & Stagehands: 20
- Décor & Florals: 8
- Show Services & Transportation: 4
- Marketing & Print: 4
- Photographer: 2
- Live Entertainers / Activation Suppliers: 3
- Venue:
 - Management: 10
 - Chefs: 8
 - Food & Beverage Team: 45
 - Housekeepers: 85
 - Bellman/Parking: 30
 - Front desk/reservations/concierges: 19

ONE CONFERENCE PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT FOR 243 ALBERTANS!

This does not include the economic impact when those attendees then go to local restaurants, shops, use transportation, etc. Also not included in these numbers would be the people employed in linen rentals, food & beverage sourcing, transportation, etc. When that conference goes virtual the employment number drops to fewer than 10 people.

A single gala designed to fundraise for a non-profit organization can employ the following:

- Event producing company: 2
- Client staff dedicated to event: 3
- Audio Visual: 10
- Décor & Florals: 20
- Auction: 5
- Marketing & Print: 4
- Photographer: 2
- Venue:
 - Management: 4
 - Chefs & Kitchen staff: 9
 - Food & Beverage Team: 62
 - Housekeepers: 1
 - Loading dock/Security/IT: 8

ONE FUNDRAISING GALA PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT FOR 130 ALBERTANS!



A single wedding for 170 guests hosted at a hotel can employ the following:

- Planning + Design Team: 2
- Venue (Hotel)
 - Management: 2
 - Food & Beverage: 15
 - Guest services: 12
- Photographer & Videographer: 4
- Band: 6
- DJ: 1
- Rentals: 2
- Florist: 2
- Hair and Makeup: 6
- Lighting / AV: 1
- Stationery: 1
- Officiant: 1
- Event Childcare: 4

ONE WEDDING PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT FOR 60 ALBERTANS!

Those are just three small examples. There are **thousands** of events like these, every year in Alberta. ***When we add in the staffing of sporting events, rodeos, festivals, and concerts our industry provides full and part time employment to tens of thousands of Albertans.***

Over 19,000 events were CANCELLED in 2020 due to COVID-19. That number continues to grow into 2021 impacting the employment of over 5000 Albertans.

Economic Impact of a Sporting Event in Alberta:

A single three-day International sporting event for 1107 athletes/coaches, and 26,922 overall spectators brought the following economic impact for Calgary business while employing 412 full time people at an average salary of \$35.25 hour and allowing 693 excited citizens to gain experience as volunteers.

- Food and Beverage \$77,124.69
- Vendors (rentals, av, planner, printing etc.) \$143,983.20
- Accommodations/Transportation - \$83,092.40 (which does not include the DMF fee collected by Tourism Calgary. This does include trips to Banff)
- Venue \$69,188
- Parking and Security \$9624.36

CURRENT EVENT INDUSTRY WORKFORCE CHALLENGES:

- Lack of Financial Support: Current government supports do not continue past June (CWES) and will not support the industry until it is fully back in operation with no restrictions. Current government supports do not replace the revenue generated by producing and supporting events.
- Brain Drain: Workforce is leaving the industry in record numbers to industries that can provide stable employment. Without further supports or a plan to get events



operational again more industry professionals will leave. New hires cannot replace the years of experience current employees have.

- **Mental Health / Anxiety:** Business owners are concerned that if events are not re-opened their businesses will NOT survive; putting even more people out of work. There is also a mental health impact to our communities by not having a safe way to gather and participate in arts, culture, worship and share in a sense of belonging.

STAGED RE-OPENING SUMMARY:

The health and safety of all Albertans is the TOP PRIORITY to the event industry; but we must recognize that COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, we implore the Government of Alberta to work with us now to develop safe plans for people to meet again. It takes months and in some cases years of planning for an event to take place, so we are not expecting that larger events will be hosted immediately, but we must plan now for future opportunities. With that, all parties must place an increased focus on health, hygiene and safety.

We seek similar permissions for Live Events as have been granted to restaurants, retail and places of worship and granted previously to trade shows and exhibiting events (as per the Government of Alberta COVID-19 INFORMATION GUIDANCE FOR TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITING EVENTS)

Recommendations to continue the Path Forward, Together:

- **Commit to a plan of re-opening for the Live Event industry that is tapered, stringent and methodical, with reopening plans based on science and common sense, with a vision to fully re-open in 2021.**
- Permit the Live Event industry to plan safe events in restricted numbers, in household groupings, and with all required risk mitigation measures in place and to do so with the same capacity restrictions as restaurants, retail and places of worship.
- Work closely with the Live Event industry to plan for appropriate and consistent expansion of event size as case rates and vaccination rates change.
- Reopen event spaces with strong risk mitigation measures in place, and to do so with the same capacity restrictions and limitations as restaurants, retail and places of worship.
- Base indoor gathering size on square footage of space available and overall capacity *instead of group size*, beginning with 15% and making our way to 100%
- Provide an opportunity to meet with Dr. Hinshaw's team to plan and develop ways to move forward safely together. Opening the live event and meetings industry will help to generate much needed money back into the economy, bring back 10s of thousands of jobs and offer safe opportunities for people to meet face-to-face again.
- Differentiate between indoor social gatherings at homes and professionally produced events and transmission rates.



STRATEGIES FOR RE-OPENING EVENTS SAFELY:

Using professional event planners with reputable event suppliers ensures SAFE events with little risk for transmission of COVID-19.

NOT ALL EVENTS ARE EQUAL. Face-to-face interaction is part of the human condition and mental well-being. Events play a significant role in bringing people together. Live events bring people together for numerous reasons including education, commerce, celebration, worship, demonstration, sports, music, arts, politics and learning. The risk of attending a live event should be no greater than shopping at a large box store, going to a restaurant, or going to a place of worship. The difference is this: event organizers are professionals who are experts in the art of bringing together large groups while controlling human traffic flow, mitigating risk, creating and enforcing policies and procedures, and creating a safe environment for all attendees.

Professionally managed events in a controlled environment with adherence to reasonable guidelines present one of the safest environments for people to meet face-to-face.

Ticket sales and pre-registration at live events also allows for effective contact tracing to be facilitated. ALEC can attest that professional event managers, following a robust set of standards, industry best practices, policies and procedures, the risk for COVID-19 transmission can be greatly reduced. Through risk mitigation, we believe that larger numbers of attendees can safely attend live events.

ALEC RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are a NUMBER of guidelines developed under the Chief Medical Officer of Health that organizers of events should follow for successful and safe execution.

- Events must hire professional event managers/planners/producers who understand ALL the guidelines
- ONE document be put together for events that provides clear direction and clears up confusion
- Eliminate overlap which allows certain events to open while others remain closed

What is an Event Manager/Planner/Producer?

We would like to communicate to Albertans (through media and AHS updates) who, what and why using a **PAID** professional event planner or company during this time is SO important. We know how to keep events and guests safe. Our industry produced MANY in-person events following the strict rules and guidelines put in place by various public health orders. ***There were ZERO reported cases of COVID-19 transmission*** occurring at these professionally coordinated events.



What are some skills and qualifications of Event Managers/Planners/Producers in Alberta?

- Experts in event space design, logistics, risk management, food and beverage, production and traffic flow.
- Takes risk management, COVID-19 protocols and guest safety very seriously throughout the planning process and on-site during the event (contact tracing, PPE supplies, sanitizing stations, distance floor plans, etc.).
- Years of experience and training through numerous event industry positions (hotels or suppliers, hospitality, event planner, project manager, etc.)
- Has a professional contract for each client to sign before work on the event begins which includes information on COVID-19 protocols and restrictions

Business owners who are event manager/planners/producers should have the following:

- University or College degree/diploma (Business management, hospitality, event management, public relations, design, etc.) **AND/OR**
- Specialized programs/certificates obtained online or through local schools – like NAIT Event Management Certificate Program or Mount Royal University’s Event Management Certificate
- Is a registered business (sole-proprietor or corporation) through Alberta Registries and has a local business license to operate
- Can show proof of general liability insurance for a minimum of \$2million dollars coverage
- Has a professional website/social media accounts and credible references that you can contact to verify past work
- Has positive and professional testimonials from past clients and other industry professionals
- May be a member of a local industry association such as:
 - International Special Events Association ([ILEA](#))
 - Meeting Planners International ([MPI](#))
 - Professional Convention Management Association ([PCMA](#))
 - Canadian Society of Professional Event Planners ([CanSPEP](#))
- May have a Professional Designation
 - Certified Meeting Professional ([CMP](#))
 - Certified Special Events Professional ([CSEP](#))
 - Certified Meeting Manager ([CMM](#))
 - Wedding Planners Certificate of Canada ([WPIC](#))

Additional event professionals may also include: Event rental companies, printers, graphic designers, prop designers, photographers, videographers, venues (hotels, convention centres, halls, restaurants and private facilities), caterers, audio visual & lighting companies, stagehands, stage managers, entertainers, and more!



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: RAPID TESTING

The Live Event industry world-wide has been working with rapid testing as an additional way of keeping events safe. We would like to be able to engage with the Province as rapid testing options for events continue to develop. For example, if an event was able to pay for rapid testing for all attendees, and the logistics met all current provincial guidelines we would hope that the event could take place with approvals from Alberta Health. We wish to be able to discuss this further within our engagement sessions with the Ministry of Health.

Thank you for your attention on this important issue.

We don't want to open our industry unsafely. But we do want to be able to run professionally managed events in controlled & safe environments. *Meetings mean business!*

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED DURING COVID-19

The Live Event, meeting, music and wedding industries were devastated overnight by COVID-19. Event Professionals stepped up all over the Province, Country and the World to show their ability to adapt and create unique experiences, education and meeting opportunities for their clients and organizations despite such extreme circumstances and restrictions.

Event Professionals take risk management and guest safety very seriously. We have dedicated ourselves to create and promote safe environments so that people can still gather during this time to feel connected to each other, their organizations and community. Our industry needs to be treated with the same considerations as other industries. We must overcome the barriers of fear and misinformation of the public and remove the stigmas surrounding gathering for Live Events.

Together we can work together to get the event industry back working and keep our employees and attendees safe.

We look forward to working with you.