



# Meeting Planner Resource Guide

Meetings and Conventions 2021



# Meeting THE MOMENT





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# Leadership Message

As we navigate the future of the meetings and events industry, Visit McAllen and the City of McAllen remain focused on providing the highest level of customer service. The safety and well-being of our community and its visitors is top priority, and it's one of the reasons McAllen is a top convention destination. We've developed this comprehensive guide to highlight our new approach to meetings in McAllen as we move toward reopening and hosting events in 2021.

## As a resource to you, this guide includes:

- **Protocols for different phases of reopening at the McAllen Convention Center and local businesses**
- **Pertinent and up-to-date local health and safety information**
- **Policies and procedures to follow while planning for a successful event in the midst of recovery**
- **Suggestions and ideas to consider for implementation at future events**
- **Guidance on operations for local attractions and the surrounding Convention Center district**

McAllen has always provided first-class hospitality in a safe and welcoming environment for its convention attendees, and we look forward to continuing that tradition and creating memorable experiences for all our visitors.

**Sincerely,**



**Robert Lopez**

Vice President  
Visit McAllen

# Current Situation

As we navigate through a new and unprecedented time, Visit McAllen has been working diligently with various organizations and local agencies to determine the best practices for meeting planners, event attendees and tourists to this vibrant South Texas city. As the situation continues to change, we will remain focused on supporting our industry in its recovery towards hosting events once again.

## Hidalgo County Health Update

For the most up-to-date information on Hidalgo County's Covid-19 case count and figures, [View Here.](#)

## Business Updates

For Hidalgo County's business guidelines on re-opening, please refer to the '[Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas](#)'.

McAllen businesses and retail stores continue to follow local, state and federal guidelines such as mask wearing, implementing occupancy limits and practicing social distancing indoors.

## Additional Safety Resources

As more information becomes available on the changing situation, Visit McAllen continues to adhere to safety guidelines provided by:

- [State of Texas](#)
- [Texas Department of State Health Services](#)
- [Office of the Texas Governor](#)
- [Hidalgo County](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Travel Texas](#)

# Meetings & Events

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## McAllen Convention Center

The safety and servicing of all guests is of the utmost importance at the McAllen Convention Center. Their team has put together a comprehensive plan for reopening called “Together Again”, which outlines the policies and procedures for welcoming back events and attendees.

[View here](#) to see it in full.

### Ideas to Consider / Other Resources: Hybrid Events

- [PCMA: What Equipment Do I Need for a Hybrid Event?](#)
- [CVENT: Hybrid Events for Venues: How to Prepare for the Future](#)
- [CVENT: Hybrid Events: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Bizzabo Blog: 2021 Guide to Virtual Conferences](#)
- [Training Industry: Virtual Panels: 10 Tips for Speakers and Moderators](#)

## Food & Beverage

Spectra Food Services at the McAllen Convention Center is equipped with a Covid-19 Reopening Task Force that has put together an extensive guide detailing new protocols for storage, sanitization, food preparation and servicing. [View here](#) for Spectra’s full updated policies.

### Ideas to Consider:

- **Stagger food and beverage stations and times**
- **Adjust buffet layouts to eliminate germ hotspots**
- **Utilize use of outdoor space for meals**
- **Have all dining protocols clearly posted on association website**



## McAllen Safe Stay Commitment

McAllen's Safe Stay Commitment is a pledge to visitors that McAllen will provide a safe and welcoming environment at its airport, hotels, retail businesses, restaurants, convention facilities, attractions and other places frequented by guests. [View here](#) for the full Safe Stay Commitment and a list of participating partners.

### McAllen Safe Stay partners are committed to the following:

- Use face coverings indoors
- Practice social distancing
- Provide hand sanitizer to visitors
- Follow CDC cleaning protocols and recommendations
- Implement contactless payment when possible
- Provide general COVID-19 awareness training for employees

### Participating Safe Stay Attractions

- [Quinta Mazatlan](#)
- [International Museum of Art & Science \(IMAS\)](#)
- [McAllen Public Library](#)
- [McAllen Heritage Center](#)
- [Palm View Golf Course](#)

### Getting to and Around McAllen

- [McAllen International Airport \(MFE\)](#)
- [Metro McAllen](#)
- Hotel shuttles and third party transportation services available

# Tradeshows/Exhibitions

## Show Floor Setup/Logistics

Layouts and setups for exhibitions will likely need to be readjusted to incorporate social distancing, while also taking into account event attendance numbers. If you are looking to adjust the setup for your exhibition, it is important to consult with your event contact at the McAllen Convention Center or hotel site. Together, you will be able to collaborate on a layout that best suits your event's needs, while ensuring a safe environment.

\*Layouts must always adhere to local fire code requirements and are subject to fire marshal approval. As citywide, regional and state health code requirements change, they will continue to take precedence.

## Ideas to Consider:

- Incorporate wider aisles
- Indicate one-way walking direction in aisles
- Remove booth carpets
- Extend exhibit show hours
- Redesign the setup of food service areas
- Thoroughly review show floor before opening
- Integrate technology to allow for touch-free capabilities
- Consider stacked arrival and exit times for attendees
- Enable digital business card exchange
- Plan for cleaning of spaces throughout the day
- Maintain increased signage for health and safety protocols

## Tools

[Banquet Tables Pro Calculator: Social Distancing Room Space Calculator](#)

[Stage America: Meeting Space Calculator](#)

\*Please also refer to the maximum capacity layouts provided in the McAllen Convention Center's Together Again Reopening plan.

# Networking

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## Networking Receptions/Happy Hours

Invaluable face to face meetings remain one of the leading benefits of connecting with others at conferences and events. We understand the desire to do so still exists, and that it cannot be replicated in an entirely virtual setting. As we explore new ways to continue to make this fundamental element of meetings happen, here are a few considerations for planning:

### Ideas to Consider:

- **Make use of outdoor space at the venue**
- **Incorporate socially distanced seating and catering setups**
- **Offer tiered zones associated with varying degrees of interaction**
- **Conduct “speed networking”- putting time limits on interactions**
- **Maintain virtual elements like live video**
- **Include virtual photo booths to display during the event**
- **Display signage of engagement protocols throughout the space**

As always, collaboration with your onsite event coordinator for setups and catering logistics will aid you in the planning process. Please consult with them for best practices at the facility.



# Health & Safety Protocols

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## Lodging

All hotels throughout McAllen follow heightened cleaning protocols and procedures in accordance with their brand standard. For a comprehensive guide to these updated, stringent practices, please explore below:

- **Best Western:** [We Care Clean](#)
- **Choice Hotels:** [Commitment to Clean](#)
- **Drury Hotels:** [Clean + Safe Commitment](#)
- **Hilton:** [Hilton EventReady with CleanStay](#)
- **IHG:** [Clean Promise](#)
- **Marriott International:** [Commitment to Clean](#)
- **Radisson Hotels:** [Health & Safety Pledge](#)
- **Wyndham Hotels & Resorts:** [Count On Us Health & Safety Protocols](#)

## Testing Positive for Covid-19

The McAllen Convention Center has outlined a series of protocols to follow should a visitor test positive, or begin to show symptoms of Covid-19 while onsite the facility. [View here](#) to look over the procedures in their Together Again reopening plan. They include:

- Screening each visitor for a temperature reading
- Administering a second screening for those with an elevated temperature
- Administering a second screening for those with other common symptoms of Covid-19 including:
  - Shortness of breath
  - Sore throat and/or cough
  - A new loss of taste and/or smell
  - Headache or other muscle pain
  - Repeated shaking with chills
- If the visitor fails to pass a secondary screening, they will be asked to leave the facility and will coordinate isolation procedures with their host hotel

[View here](#) for a map of testing sites in McAllen.

# Additional Resources

## Key Contacts

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### Visit McAllen

- Robert Lopez, Vice President/Director  
[rlopez@visitmcallen.com](mailto:rlopez@visitmcallen.com)
- Leigh Wooldridge, Director of Convention Sales  
[lwooldridge@visitmcallen.com](mailto:lwooldridge@visitmcallen.com)
- Alexandra Arevalo, Convention Sales Manager  
[aarevalo@visitmcallen.com](mailto:aarevalo@visitmcallen.com)

### McAllen Convention Center

- Yajaira Flores, Director of Facilities  
[yjflores@mcallen.net](mailto:yjflores@mcallen.net)
- Karla Puente, Manager of Sales and Event Services  
[kpunte@mcallen.net](mailto:kpunte@mcallen.net)

# MAKE THE CALL

so you'll be the one who knows a place

1200 Ash Ave. - McAllen, Texas

(956 ) 682-2871 [meetings@visitmcallen.com](mailto:meetings@visitmcallen.com)

