

MPI Michigan Blog – April 2021

As of April 5, all Michiganders age 16 and older are eligible to get the Covid-19 vaccine. It doesn't mean we're going to be open for business overnight, but it means the light at the end of the tunnel is getting bigger. And as vaccines become more readily available, we have to start thinking about our Strategic Meetings Management programs in a post-pandemic world. Our friends at [MeetingsNet.com](https://www.meetingsnet.com) have laid out a few guidelines to help direct your program.

Reestablish the value of the SMM program If you had an SMM in place before the pandemic, you were able to show your value to your company. You could quickly assess the financial commitment for future meetings and events, share a postponement/cancellation strategy with stakeholders, and therefore reduce the amount of penalties and fees paid. But now that we're in a post-pandemic world, you're going to need to do two things:

1 - Reinforce the benefits of an SMM program to the company. Communicate with stakeholders now, so the program's value is top of mind.

2 - If you don't have an SMM, use your pandemic experience to begin making a case for establishing one.

Revise the meetings & events governance model to be more inclusive

Chances are, pre-pandemic, the governance of your SMM was rather narrow, typically owned by the meeting, travel, or procurement department. With the transition to virtual, there are other key groups that need to be part of the conversation. IT and security are at the top of the list for their roles in sourcing and securing virtual-event platforms. In the past, a virtual technology team (if you had one) might have helped with an occasional online town hall, but likely worked independently of the meeting team. Today, both teams should be working together on the delivery of virtual (and hybrid) meetings. Another team that should be part of the governance is the marketing department. They should bring their expertise with data and analysis to the virtual meeting arena.

Bottom line: Be proactive and reach out to each of these groups regarding M&E governance.

Retool the meetings & events definition to include virtual and hybrid delivery methods

You need to understand the enterprise-wide meetings and events portfolio, including face-to-face, virtual and hybrid events. Pre-pandemic, you might not have done any virtual or hybrid meetings, but for the foreseeable future, those have to be in your wheelhouse. The benefits of SMM apply no matter the medium: visibility into spend; risk mitigation (financial, reputational and personal); cost control; the ability to measure success metrics, and the use of vetted and approved suppliers. If you haven't already, take time to redefine what a meeting or event is for your company, and communicate that to your organization. The directive could be as simple as, "If you would have registered this meeting as a face-to-face event, you need to register it now as a virtual or hybrid meeting."