



Event Preparation Recommendations & Guidelines

MSU Extension has a process in place to request a waiver to conduct in-person events and programming following specific guidelines and requirements. As a reminder, waivers will be approved on a limited basis.

The MSU Community Compact provides specific expectations of MSU employees regarding face masks, social distancing, social hygiene and related issues. Strict adherence to the Compact is expected of all MSU Extension employees. Failure to follow these expectations may lead to revocation of exception privileges and possible discipline through the HR process.

MSU Extension expectations regarding programming, meetings and events will remain fluid and subject to change at any time based on guidance from the State of Michigan, MSU Administration, available public health data and other relevant factors.

The topics below will help you consider how to create a plan for an in-person activity and prepare you to complete the event waiver survey request. There may be additional topics or conversations related to the specific event waiver submitted that may need to be addressed outside of the guidelines below. Submitting the event waiver survey request DOES NOT automatically approve an in-person event. The planning process should not move forward or be promoted publicly until final approval is received.

The document below should be used to help plan your in-person activity. This should be used for all in-person activities, including those being hosted by partner organizations where MSU Extension staff will be providing educational content or opportunities. Begin by reviewing the current guidelines if you are planning an indoor or outdoor activity. Keep these overall guidelines in mind as you work your way through the other topics for consideration. The additional topics to consider apply to both indoor and outdoor in-person activities.

If multiple staff are involved in the in-person activity planning, one staff person should take the lead on submitting the survey request. They will list the additional staff that have been involved in the planning process during the survey submission.

If you have questions, please reach out to your Institute Director or direct supervisor to discuss concerns or questions during your planning process. You will want to have a detailed plan outlined for your submission to the Event Waiver Request survey. The more information you provide, the better picture you create for how your event will meet recommended health and safety guidelines and the MSU Community Compact.

A copy of the event waiver survey questions can be found here:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/od/coronavirus/coronavirus-q-a#Programs>

The event waiver survey request can be found here:

https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56GxUUcH1qn418N

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OUTDOOR EVENT GUIDELINES AS OF 6/1/21

Factors that will be part of the exception review process include, but are not limited to:

- All in-person outdoor gatherings must follow [CDC](#) and [MDHHS guidelines](#) for outdoor non-residential gatherings.
- Strict adherence to the [MSU Community Compact](#) and agreement to the Compact by all partner organizations and individual participants.
- Sign-off by MSU Extension administration (institute directors or Director's Office). You can find the link to the survey here: https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56GxUUcH1qn418N
- All approved gatherings must have an option for participants to receive educational information presented virtually or electronically if not attending in-person.
- All staff who receive approval for an in-person gathering must complete [Communicating Through Conflict](#) prior to in-person programming taking place. This training must be completed annually.
- For the purposes of this document, "outdoor" is defined as being completely outside with no permanent or temporary structures with a roof and enclosure.
- Decisions regarding exceptions will be informed by state and local public health recommendations and university guidance at the time of the approval and may be rescinded if conditions change.
- Additional requirements for this exception are subject to change.



INDOOR EVENT GUIDELINES AS OF 6/1/21

Factors that will be part of the exception review process include, but are not limited to:

- In-person indoor activities must be limited to no more than 25 people or 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal, whichever is greater (including all MSU Extension staff, presenters/facilitators and participants). If the establishment does not have such a capacity limit, then the total occupancy is limited to 30 people per 1,000 square feet. All in-person indoor activities must follow all [CDC](#) and [MDHHS guidelines](#). Additional details can be found in the [Epidemic Order FAQs](#).
 - Per MDHHS guidelines indoor means a location that is fully or partially enclosed on top and:
 - Fully or partially enclosed on two or more contiguous sides; or
 - if fully or partially enclosed on two non-contiguous sides, any part of that space that is more than 8 feet from an open side is indoors
 - Indoor spaces, therefore, include most buildings (such as barns and garages), vehicles (such as buses and trains), and temporary structures (including tents or canopies with side walls or coverings).
 - Tents with one side are not indoors. Tents with two opposite sides are indoors, except for the spaces within them that are within 8 feet of an open side. Tents with two adjacent sides, three sides, or four sides, are all indoors. The placement of a tent next to a wall, building, or other structure is equivalent to a side. Opening a doorway in the middle of a side does not make that side open.
- Strict adherence to the [MSU Community Compact](#) and agreement to the Compact by all partner organizations and individual participants.
- Sign-off by MSU Extension administration (institute directors or Director's Office). You can find the link to the survey here: https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56GxUUcH1qn418N
- All approved gatherings must have an option for participants to receive educational information presented virtually or electronically if not attending in-person.
- All staff who receive approval for an in-person gathering must complete [Communicating Through Conflict](#) prior to in-person programming taking place. This training must be completed annually.
- Outdoor programming, meetings and events have a much higher likelihood of approval. For the purposes of this document, "outdoor" is defined as being completely outside with no permanent or temporary structures with a roof and enclosure.
- Decisions regarding exceptions will be informed by state and local public health recommendations and university guidance at the time of the approval and may be rescinded if conditions change.
- Additional requirements for this exception are subject to change.



Registration Considerations

Pre-Registration Recommendations:

- All participants must register (either through pre-registration or onsite registration).
 - Encourage touch-less payment options. Pre-payment by credit card online is the preferred method.
- Make note of the maximum number of attendees during registration.
- Pre-registration should include the following statement on marketing materials and registration forms/sites:

“COVID-19 UPDATE: We are planning for an in-person program in _____(month). However, we continue to monitor the evolution of the pandemic and how this might impact the event. We will decide as to whether it is necessary to postpone or change the format of the event prior to EVENT MONTH. This decision will be based on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recommendations/guidelines from MSU, the State of Michigan, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local Health Department. You will be contacted regarding any changes or updates through the email you use to register.”
- Pre-registration should include the following text as part of the registration process for participants to read and agree to as a condition of attending an in-person event:

As a condition of attending a Michigan State University (MSU) Extension program, all employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers and participants are required to follow the guidelines below. To learn more, view the [MSU Community Compact](#).

I understand that I am personally responsible for protecting the health and safety of myself and others. My actions will impact everyone. There is no guarantee that I or others will not become infected by COVID-19. I acknowledge the risks of COVID-19, and I acknowledge that I will do my part to protect myself and others.

I agree that I will follow these requirements while participating in MSU-related or sponsored activities, wherever they may occur:

- **Face Coverings** - I will wear an appropriate face covering over my nose and mouth while I attend an MSU Extension event unless I am fully vaccinated, or I am unable to tolerate a face covering for medical reasons.
- **Physical Distancing** - I will maintain six feet of distance between myself and others with whom I do not live and did not travel with to the event.
- **Shaking Hands** – I will refrain from shaking hands.
- **Self-Monitoring** – I will monitor myself for flu-like symptoms and will not attend the event if not feeling well. I will also refrain from attending if I have been exposed to or have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days. I will not attend events if I have traveled out of the country in the previous 14 days.

I agree to follow these guidelines. YES NO

- During registration, please collect at least first and last name, email, phone number, and an emergency contact, in case something happens onsite or contact tracing is needed.
- Install physical barriers, if possible, at the registration table to limit exposure. When not possible, plan to clean and disinfect between participants.



- Consider limiting attendance to staff and participants who live in the local area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spreading the virus from one area to another.
- Consider sending a confirmation email to participants that reiterates their agreement to follow the MSU Community Compact that says:

“We look forward to seeing you at EVENT NAME on DATE at TIME. By registering for this event, you have disclosed that you are vaccinated for COVID-19 OR have agreed to properly wear a mask throughout the event (if required), practicing social distancing and monitoring yourself for flu-like symptoms – staying home if you either do not feel well, or test positive for COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone who is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19. If you feel that you cannot adhere to these guidelines, please join us virtually at INSERT LINK TO VIRTUAL CONTENT.

Those not adhering to these guidelines will be asked to leave or the program will be canceled.”

Onsite Registration Recommendations:

- Set up queue lines with floor markings to indicate social distancing requirements. Use the [MSU Extension branded](#) or [Sparty branded](#) signage. Use the branded [directional signage](#) as needed.
- Have staff hand participants name badges or registration materials and check them in, to eliminate multiple people utilizing pens or touching items. When possible, staff should use disposable gloves. Participant registration materials should not touch or mingle, when possible.
- Consider mailing all necessary items and making everything digital where participants can download needed items.
- Offer a hybrid event in order to reduce the number of attendees who participate in person.

Logistical Considerations

General Recommendations:

- If indoors, encourage any organizations that share or use the same venue to also follow these considerations and limit shared use, if possible. To have MSU Extension staff present at any in-person event, all partners must adhere to the MSU Community Compact.
- Check with local/county/state health officials to know the local regulations. This also includes Tribal partners for specific requirements for events held on Tribal lands or locations governed by Tribal partners. Also, check with your hosting venue to determine if they have any additional requirements.
 - For example: are temperature or health screenings required before entering a county or to host an in-person event?
- Ensure there is enough assistance with the event to monitor compliance.
- Provide a virtual option for others who may not be comfortable attending in person to participate.
 - For example: Sharing of pictures / videos and handouts after the event.
- If the event includes viewing displays or a demonstration, participants must remain socially distanced, or it must be done one at a time (or one immediate household at a time) with sanitization between viewers.



Social Distancing Recommendations:

- If possible, employ physical barriers to aid in social distancing.
- If held indoors, participants must not exceed 25 people or 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal, whichever is greater, including MSU Extension staff, partners or presenters. If the establishment does not have such a capacity limit, then the total occupancy is limited to 30 people per 1,000 square feet.
- All seating should be six feet apart, with preference of participants at individual tables. If more than one person from an immediate household attends, they may sit together.
- If seating by rows, alternate seating to aid in social distancing.

Room Setup/Seating Recommendations:

- When possible, participants should be at individual tables and be at least six feet apart.
- If round tables must be used, limit the number around the table to 4 at each eight-foot table.
- Speaker platforms, podiums or lecterns should be set ten feet away from nearest participant and should be sanitized between participants.
- Stagger use of shared indoor spaces and clean/disinfect between uses.

Tent/Enclosure Recommendations:

- While tents or temporary structures may be located outside, they can fall into indoor guidelines when they meet the following MDHHS guidelines for indoors.
 - Indoor means a location that is fully or partially enclosed on top and:
 - Fully or partially enclosed on two or more contiguous sides; or
 - if fully or partially enclosed on two non-contiguous sides, any part of that space that is more than 8 feet from an open side is indoors
 - Indoor spaces, therefore, include most buildings (such as barns and garages), vehicles (such as buses and trains), and temporary structures (including tents or canopies with side walls or coverings).
 - Tents with one side are not indoors. Tents with two opposite sides are indoors, except for the spaces within them that are within 8 feet of an open side. Tents with two adjacent sides, three sides, or four sides, are all indoors. The placement of a tent next to a wall, building, or other structure is equivalent to a side. Opening a doorway in the middle of a side does not make that side open.
- If tents or temporary enclosures are to be used during outdoor in-person activities, they must NOT meet the definition above provided by MDHHS. There must still be enough space to allow participants to social distance at all times while in the tent or enclosure.



Speaker Recommendations:

- Speaker platforms, podiums or lecterns should be set ten feet away from nearest participant.
- Speakers must remain at least 10 feet away from participants while speaking or presenting. This includes MSU Extension staff who are speaking or presenting.
- Speakers may not share printed handouts. All handouts / materials should be provided by posting online and sharing a link where participants can download or should be given to participants at registration to eliminate multiple touch points.

Restroom Recommendations:

- Porta Johns or portable bathroom equipment are not recommended.
 - Exceptions may be made if there is a plan for sanitization between use and availability for hand washing/sanitizing.
- Consider limiting the number of participants occupying the restroom at one time.
- Form pre-determined queues for restroom lines, including floor markings to indicate social distancing locations.
- Utilize no-touch soap dispensers and towel dispensers where possible.
- Ensure restrooms are operational with functional toilets.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces regularly, including faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs/handles, countertops, and light switches.
- Include restroom availability in registration materials so participants know what to expect when on-site.

Traffic Flow Recommendations:

- Provide an abundance of signage explaining procedures. Use the [MSU Extension branded](#) or [Sparty branded](#) signage.
- Utilize floor markings, partitions or roped guides to help create a one-way flow of traffic for registration, to/from sessions, bathrooms, etc.
- Utilize floor markings or other placards to indicate six-foot spacing when participants will be standing in line or observing a presentation, when seating is not available.
- Signage should direct participants where to walk in order to control traffic flows and patterns, providing one-way patterns, when possible. Use the [branded directional signage](#).
- Post signage in highly visible locations.



Food and Beverage Recommendations:

- Food service at events may be considered, however, it must be served in ways that eliminate multiple touch points (i.e. individually commercially packaged and spaced apart) and follow MDHHS guidelines for food service. The consumption of food or beverages is permitted only while seated in designated areas. Participants could be encouraged to bring their own food items should they need them during the event. This should be communicated in the registration materials; no on-site storage of food items should be provided.
- Bottled water is allowed but must be individually packaged. If served, the water must not be in coolers and must be accessible in ways that eliminate multiple touch points (i.e. put out on tables and spaced apart). Participants should be encouraged to bring their own water for the duration of the event. This should be communicated in the registration materials. No on-site community refilling stations should be provided.

Transportation Recommendations:

It is recommended to not provide group transportation (buses, wagons, golf carts, etc.). Hold everything in one locale with a short walking distance or encourage participants to drive their personal vehicles to each stop. If transportation must be provided, all social distancing guidelines and recommendations must be followed. This includes the following:

- Maintaining 6 feet of distance between participants at all times
- Wear face coverings while in transit (for those who are fully vaccinated, face coverings are not required)
- Eliminating as many touch points as possible
- Sanitizing and disinfecting between rides/participants

Inclement Weather Recommendations:

If inclement weather occurs or is imminent, participants should return to their personal vehicles where they can either ride out the weather or if it's safe to do so, drive home. Participants should not gather in common areas, even if social distancing and masks are observed.

Participant Considerations

Participant Recommendations and Considerations:

- Participants will adhere to the MSU Community Compact and comply with all instructional signage and placards at the event.
- All unvaccinated participants will wear an appropriate face covering over their nose and mouth while on MSU property or at an MSU-sanctioned event unless medical reasons prevent them from doing so. Face masks are required at all indoor events for participants who are not fully vaccinated.
- Per the MSU Community Compact, MDHHS, and CDC guidelines, face masks are required at all indoor events for those individuals that are not fully vaccinated or do not choose to self-disclose their vaccination status. To that end, any MSU employees leading the events should encourage that participants wear appropriate face coverings for the duration of all events.
- Have a small supply of PPE available in case a participant forgets.
- Participants, who did not travel to the event together, must always maintain six feet of distance between themselves and other participants.
- Participants should refrain from shaking hands.



- Participants should self-monitor for flu-like symptoms and should not attend the event if not feeling well. In addition, if they have been exposed or have tested positive for Covid-19, they should not attend the event.
- Provide clear and concise communication regarding all participant requirements during registration and in a reminder email to participants.
- Have ample signage at the event outlining all requirements.
- Make announcements at the event that guidelines must be followed, or the event will end immediately.
- Check with local/county/state health officials to know the local regulations. . This includes Tribal partners for specific requirements for events held on Tribal lands or locations governed by Tribal partners. Check with your hosting venue to determine if they have any additional requirements.
 - For example: are temperature or health screenings required before entering a county or to host an in-person event?

Hand Washing Recommendations:

- Encourage frequent and thorough handwashing before, during and after the event.
- Provide hand sanitizer throughout various areas at the event, including but not limited to entrances/exits, registration, restrooms, in each room or stop.
- Provide access, with adequate soap, for hand washing at sinks within the venue.
- Utilize disposable towels in place of jet air dryers.
- Provide appropriate signage of proper hand-washing techniques at all sinks and appropriate signage near all hand sanitizer stations.

Contact Tracing Recommendations:

- Follow local health guidelines regarding contact tracing and any necessary reporting.
- All attendees must register and provide at a minimum, their first and last name, email and phone number. They should also be aware this information may be shared as applicable with the local and state health departments, as well as the venue.

Difficult Conversation Considerations

MSU Extension staff may be faced with situations where they need to have difficult conversations with others regarding the MSU Community Compact. These may take place between partners in planning for an in-person activity or while on-site at an approved in-person activity with participants. MSU Extension administration wants to help support and prepare staff for having these conversations. Administration also wants to support staff that make difficult decisions in the moment to ask participants to leave or close an event due to non-compliance with the MSU Community Compact. No staff member should feel that they have to remain in a situation that feels unsafe. MSU Extension administration will support staff and engage in conversations on their behalf to show the importance of the MSU Community Compact being followed for MSU sponsored or MSU attended events. MSU Extension administration will support any staff that decides they cannot work with partners, asks participants to leave in-person activities or has to close an in-person activity due to non-compliance with the MSU Community Compact.



The following should be done during planning process:

- Complete the [Communicating through Conflict](#) online course and think about how to apply the principles to your specific in-person activity.
- Develop a plan for handling conversations with participants who may not agree with or be following the MSU Community Compact.
 - Who will be involved in these conversations?
 - Is there support from the venue that can be utilized for assistance in these conversations?
 - Is there support from other staff or presenters at the event that can be utilized for assistance in these conversations?
 - Who can you call for support? Talk with your institute director, district director or supervisor to determine who can be available should you need additional support during these conversations.
 - Consider making frequent announcements to participants reminding them of the MSU Community Compact requirements.
 - Provide adequate visible signage showing expectations of following the MSU Community Compact.
 - Include participant expectations in the registration process and include a follow up confirmation email that outlines what participants have agreed to and the potential consequences of not following the MSU Community Compact.
- Develop a plan for talking with partners who may not understand or agree with the MSU Community Compact:
 - Remind partners that a condition of having MSU Extension involved in the event is that the event follows the MSU Community Compact since MSU Extension employees are MSU employees.
 - Talk through concerns and discuss how to include the MSU Community Compact as part of the planning process.

Volunteer Considerations

All volunteers must complete the following components to be considered for approval to engage in face-to-face activities:

- Active Gold or Active Silver activity status
- Communicating through Conflict volunteer training
- [Authorize and completed background check](#), iChat, within the last 12 months and [MiPSOR](#) within the last 6-months
- Sign the MSU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct within the last 12 months

In addition, staff must verify that these components have been completed.

Venue Contract Considerations

- What does the facility contract allow regarding cancellation or rescheduling?
- Does the contract include a force majeure clause?
- Does the contract mention pandemic specifically?
- Does the contract include a joint indemnification clause?
- Does the contract include statements about moving spaces within the facilities to accommodate for social distancing guidelines and the impact this may have on room fees?



Question to Consider Regarding Budgets

- Have you communicated that pre-registration and pre-payment is required online?
- Are you concerned about meeting sponsorship goals?
- Will your audience participate if there is a fee related to the program?
 - Is the fee reasonable?
 - Do you expect participants will be able to pay with credit card online?
- What costs would you still incur if you must change to a virtual format?

Other Questions to Consider

- Is your target audience in a high-risk category?
- Will your target audience be allowed to travel, or will they face travel restrictions?
- Will your target audience have the funds to travel?
- Can your content be delivered virtually? If not, what in-person experiences are essential to a successful event?



Event Waiver Request Process (Start to Finish)

