



Public Gathering Recommendations March 11, 2020

As city officials assess the question of whether to limit or eliminate mass public gatherings, Arts & Venues offers the following information to aid in that decision-making.

Public health officials broadly recommend that gatherings of greater than 200 people be restricted to slow the spread of the novel Coronavirus, COVID-19. Slowing transmission is critically important to ensuring our healthcare system does not become overloaded by caring for the ill. While closing public venues may be the best option to prevent the spread of the illness, it is not without significant financial and community impacts.

Arts & Venues operates five of Denver's largest and most iconic venues, including the McNichols Civic Center Building, Performing Arts Complex, Coliseum, Red Rocks, and the Colorado Convention Center. Collectively, these venues welcome over 2.75 million people per year and generate over \$62 million a year in direct revenue. There is secondary and tertiary revenues in the form of lodgers tax by conventioners, additional sales and use tax from patrons and event participants and additional economic impacts to restaurants, ride share and taxi companies, etc. Estimating these impacts to revenue are especially challenging to estimate, but they are no doubt significant.

Any decision that would disrupt event operations in these venues (which are mostly large venues capable of hosting 2,000 or more people) would result in a significant financial impact as outlined above, but would also have ripple effects through our agency, the city, and the community. For instance, the resident companies that perform at the Performing Arts Complex (Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Symphony, Colorado Ballet, and Opera Colorado) would be prevented from mounting productions and concerts that result in significant earned revenue for their critical operations. Absent specific and detailed knowledge of each of these organizations' business relationships and legal circumstances, it seems likely that some of these partners would be more resilient to these kinds of impacts, while others may be unable to weather such a significant financial burden of losing any portion of these revenues.

At the Colorado Convention Center, clients often bring thousands, or even tens of thousands of people to Denver and with them hotel bookings, food and beverage purchases, and other ancillary money to Denver's economy through sales and use taxes, and other ancillary events related to, but not part of the convention itself. As of today, there have been six conventions that have been canceled with another dozen or so who have inquired about cancellation policies. To further illustrate the interconnected nature of these activities, the canceling of the American Academy of Dermatology convention at the convention center alone resulted in the loss of an additional six receptions booked in smaller venues at the Performing Arts Complex—and that doesn't even include events at private venues of which we are not aware.

Red Rocks is the financial engine of Arts & Venues' business and has been effectively fully booked for this year's concert season (roughly mid-April through mid-October) for several weeks. The revenue generated at Red Rocks that benefits Arts & Venues Special Revenue Fund, comes not just from rent of the facility, but from food and beverage purchases, parking and associated ticketing fees (Arts & Venues makes money from fees associated from the sale of tickets), and sponsorships. Losing just one performance could be a devastating loss of revenue and rippling operational and business impacts to our service partners and clients.

Presently, A&V has left the decision to cancel or postpone performances, conventions, and events in the hands of the presenter. For reasons of force majeure, most organizations that book A&V venues are waiting for official action from public health or elected officials rather than cancel their event on their own.

Arts & Venues relies heavily on on-call and contract labor to accomplish the work load associated with pulling off its nearly 1,500 events per year. Any decision to affect venue operations would affect the work load not only of venue event staff who would not be called to work and also have no benefit safety net (e.g. paid time off), but could also adversely affect administrative staff who typically manage operational elements and whose workload would be significantly altered. Due to the six recently canceled conventions, CCC is considering employee furloughs due to already realized economic impacts. Simply put, without our venues our Mission Essential Functions (MEF's) basically cease to exist.

This information is not meant to discourage anyone from making what is the right, or prudent decision in the best interest of the public, but is offered as information in making what can only be considered an incredibly difficult decision to protect the health and well-being of the public.

To aid in the prevention of the spread of the disease, the following actions have been put into place. We will continue to evaluate and implement best-practices as guided by our partners and colleagues' expertise:

- Signs and messages posted at public entrances, in restrooms, and throughout venues' front and back-of-house areas reminding visitors of personal protective measures such as washing hands, refraining from shaking hands, and from touching their face.
- Actively discouraging individuals who are sick, or think they might be from entering our facilities
- Enhanced cleaning measures, including increased disinfection of high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, handrails, etc.
- Close coordination with our service providers (such as food service operators') to ensure they are adhering to CDC and local recommendations.

Tomorrow, we plan to implement the following:

- a moratorium on future bookings in all city venues in March, April and May until further notice
- Messaging to our clients and partners that public gathering of more than 200 people is not recommended, and giving them the opportunity to cancel the event on their own without being ordered to do so.
- Arts & Venues also creates its own programming and per the Mayor's message today and in support of this recommendation for social distancing, will cancel its own internal programming, regardless of the planned size of the gathering.

Based on the rapid evolution of this situation in Colorado—the increase of community spread, and the actions taken by colleagues in other cities, a full or partial closure of public venues feels almost inevitable. For reasons of consistency, messaging and the equitable application of policy, if it is deemed that this is the best course of action to aid in containing the virus and protecting the public's health, then A&V would request the following; *

- If inevitable, the order be issued sooner rather than later, to avoid the busy outdoor season in Denver's parks and outdoor venues
- Order to close is issued as a mandate from DDPHE for **all** venues of the specified size in the City & County of Denver as well as all events of the specified size (regardless of where they will be held). To prevent confusion, we recommend that this threshold be relatively low (recommended 50-100), but need to consider non-event spaces, such as restaurants, etc.
- All city-sponsored events, regardless of size
- All parks and recreation event permits issued for city property
- All special events occurring on city property be canceled
- All events bookings in city property be stopped until further notice

In addition to the above, we ask that all policies and mandates be consistent across agencies, including Office of Special Events, Parks & Recreation, and Arts & Venues, but to the extent that it's possible, also apply to for-

profit/private entities such as stadiums, arenas, event centers and other cultural organizations. Parks and OSE should be consulted further before implementing these recommendations.