



P R E S S R E L E A S E

Business and Industry Leaders Make Case for Return of Business Travel, Meetings, Exhibitions and Events

Science and modeling demonstrate safety of in-person meetings; economic data shows necessity

WASHINGTON (September 15, 2021)—A broad coalition spanning the business and travel community delivered an evidence-based message today: travel for professional meetings, exhibitions and events can safely resume and doing so will accelerate America’s economic and jobs recovery.

At the National Press Club, representatives of the [Let’s Meet There Coalition](#), the [U.S. Travel Association](#) and the [Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance](#), joined by [CLEAR](#), drew a spotlight to the distinctions of professional in-person gatherings from other “large gatherings,” and cited dozens of events and exhibitions that have been safely conducted in recent months, along with tools and practices to help these events continue to move forward.

The return of the business travel sector—which has lagged in its recovery—was highlighted as crucial to a broader recovery of the U.S. economy.

Tourism Economics highlighted the value of domestic business travel to the U.S. economy, which generated \$270 billion in direct travel spending supporting 4 million U.S. jobs in 2019. However, spending by business travelers declined by a staggering 68% last year and is projected to take three years to rebuild to pre-pandemic levels without focused efforts to help the sector rebound.

Tourism Economics also shared new analysis identifying the relationship between business travel and corporate performance for 14 industries over the past 26 years. The econometric analysis found that businesses experience an average gain of \$1.60 in corporate profits for each dollar invested in business travel. Corporate performance is dependent on business travel as a critical means to connect with clients, build relationships and develop ideas.

Professional meetings and exhibitions are structured events conducted under controlled environments allowing for maximum health and safety measures to protect participants, according to [analysis](#) by Ohio State University healthcare scientists.

Recent independent studies from the [Mayo Clinic](#), [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and the [U.S. Department of Defense](#) also corroborate the safety of air travel today.

Scientific modeling by the Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance (ECA) and Epistemix has shown in-person professional meetings and events pose a near-zero (0.001%) risk of COVID-19 transmission to attendees—even for large events, particularly given the layered approach to mitigation strategies. A 4x risk reduction is achieved through a layered approach of masks, vaccinations, and/or showing a negative test which creates a safe environment. Further, Epistemix modeling analysis found that events have not been shown to be a major driver of case counts, largely due to the fact that in-person events (exhibitors and attendees) have higher vaccination rates (~80%) than the overall population.

This aligns with additional findings that business travelers (and meeting organizers) are more likely than the general population to be vaccinated. According to [Destination Analysts](#), 78% of Americans who have traveled for business in the last two years have been vaccinated, compared to 72% of American travelers overall.

[Emerald](#), a leading business-to-business exhibitions organizer, highlighted that since January 2021, the organizer has safely and successfully staged over 25 B2B trade events and conferences across a diverse cross-section of industries. Emerald partnered with the Javits Convention Center in August to stage NY NOW and JA New York, which were the first two in-person events to run at the center since its closing due to the pandemic, and Outdoor Retailer, which was also the first in-person event to stage at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. Emerald plans to stage more than 15 B2B in-person trade events across the U.S. before the end of the year.

Tools such as the [CLEAR Health Pass](#) was highlighted as a seamless way for event attendees and employees to upload and verify their health status at professional events. CLEAR's Health Pass is a free, mobile experience on the CLEAR app, which securely connects a person's verified identity to their proof of vaccination and test results, to reduce public health risk and get people back to what they love. Whether it's helping Las Vegas Raiders fill their stadium, small restaurants streamline their entry with OpenTable, or helping safely bring back cultural institutions like New York Fashion Week, CLEAR's Health Pass has helped more than 130 businesses across the country and industries come back better and faster.

“Every piece of evidence that we’re seeing from the scientific and academic community tells us that, with the right practices in place, the traveling workforce and organizers of professional events can get back to the business of reconnecting with clients and colleagues,” said Roger Dow, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “Ultimately, the business community will drive the return to business travel, and in doing so, will shift the economy back to greater normalcy.”

Dow joined other leaders at today's event, including Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company; John Cordier, CEO and Co-Founder, Epistemix Inc.; Hervé Sedky, Chair of the Board, ECA and President and CEO, Emerald; and Caryn Seidman-Becker, Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO, CLEAR.

The travel industry was disproportionately impacted by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 65% of all jobs lost in 2020 supported by travel. Business travel and meetings segments suffered significant [declines](#) as travel for professional events, conferences and trade shows declined by almost 80% last year, resulting in a \$97 billion loss in spending.

A data fact sheet to support the safety of travel for professional meetings and events is available [here](#).