Managing Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) risk when organising meetings & events

Why do meeting organisers need to think about COVID-19?
Organisers of meetings and events need to think about the potential risk from COVID-19 because:
- There is a risk that people attending your meeting might unwittingly bring the COVID-19 virus to the meeting
- While COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill and be fatal to specific vulnerable groups, some of whom may be in your co-op. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment
- Co-ops have an Occupational Health and Safety obligation to their members and can be held responsible for unsafe work practices

BEFORE the meeting or event
- Carefully consider all possible alternatives to avoid a face-to-face meeting where possible.
    - Could it be replaced by a phone call, teleconference or can you meet using an online tool such as Zoom (there is a free option where people can meet online for 40 minutes)?
    - Could decisions be made via an email discussion? *Note that under CNL (Co-operatives National Law) a co-op may transact business by circulating papers amongst the directors for signature AND this can be done by text or email – your Co-op Development Coordinator can help with advice*
- If a face to face meeting is the only way that the work can be done
    - Only invite essential people to attend and check they are well before the event
    - Ask people to prepare in advance so that the meeting is as short as possible
    - Book an appropriate venue (do not use private homes) and ensure that they follow COVID safe cleaning practices, etc
    - Ask people to bring their own pens and notepaper
    - Arrange appropriate supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitiser for all participants
    - Consider having surgical masks available to offer anyone

DURING the meeting or event
- Provide information about the measures that organisers are taking to make this event safe for participants:
    - Record the name and contact details of all people attending
    - Ask all participants to use hand sanitiser when arriving at a meeting or event
    - Encourage participants to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze. Supply tissues and closed bins to dispose of them in
- Arrange seats so that participants are at least 1.5 metres apart
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated
- If anyone who starts to feel unwell, follow your preparedness plan or call the **Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398**
- Thank all participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place

AFTER the meeting
- Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month in case one or more participants become ill shortly after the event

- If someone at the meeting or event is isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case within the next 2 weeks, the participant should notify the co-op
- The co-op should notify health authorities and let all participants know they may have been exposed. Advise participants to contact their doctor or the **Coronavirus hotline 1800 678 398**

LASTLY and importantly

- This is a stressful time for many and a time to be kind to each other and consider whether a meeting can be postponed, making sure to keep anxiety and stress to a minimum
- Adapt your participation requirements to accommodate health precautions. Focus how people can assist with essential tasks from home
- Don't forget to check in with members who live alone, are older or may have particular health issues to see if their needs are being met
- Celebrate the co-op community you share. In this time of "social isolation" co-ops can provide really important community connection. Chat regularly with each other by phone or facetime, offer to fetch each other's groceries if needed, share jokes and fun stories with each other via Facebook or email and take a walk with another member, if possible
- Ask your CDC for further advice about how to run your co-op in a COVID safe way