# Guidelines and Recommendations for RAS Conference Organizers
## Best Practices - COVID-19

This document provides guidelines to conference organizers for conferences that are sponsored or co-sponsored by the [IEEE Robotics and Automation Society](#).

**Contents**

## Most Important To-Do Items

- **Timely inform** participants about changes related to the conference, whether the conference is in-person, hybrid, postponed or cancelled.
- **Read** and provide links to the following pages to conference organizers
  - [Public advice by the World Health Organization](#)
  - [IEEE guidelines on virtual events](#)
  - [COVID-19 updates on the RAS conference web pages](#)
  - [Virtual Events Resource Library](#)
- **All of the above links**
  - Add to the conference website
  - Refer attendees and authors
  - Use in announcements to mailing lists
  - Follow the presented guidelines
- **Consistently Update** conference information sources (e.g. website, paper submission site, registration site, mobile app, social media etc.)

# Organizing Virtual Events

**Things to consider when switching conference to a Virtual format** (note, these recommendations vary depending on the size of the conference):

- It is recommended that a decision about the new conference format is made at least three months before the conference start date to consider all the below options.
- Define a new budget for the virtual conference.
- Timely inform participants about the new format.
- Coordinate with the paper submission site about uploading presentation videos.
- Ensure that in the Consent & Release section of the IEEE eCF, authors opt-in so that conferences are allowed to use the video/broadcasting presentations.
- Some applications/platforms previously used in virtual conferences are:
  - [InfoVaya](#)
  - [Slack](#)
  - [Zoom](#)
  - [IEEE TV](#)
  - https://gather.town/
  - https://www.wonder.me/
  - ...
- Decide if the conference will be held live, semi-live or on-demand as well as the duration of the conference.
- Will the plenary talks be pre-recorded or live? If the talks are live, confirm speakers are available at the scheduled time and have sufficient internet connectivity.
- Award ceremony
- Access to conference proceedings (e.g., how to download proceedings that would have been distributed via USB if it was an in-person event.)
- Social media updates are important; before, during and after the conference.
- Coordinate with the workshop/tutorial organizers transition to virtual events. It is desirable that all the workshops/tutorials have a unified infrastructure.
- The conference website should include instructions for the participants about the login to the virtual platform and access to the virtual sessions.
- Define new packages to offer to sponsors and exhibitors in this new virtual format. What are the benefits and ROI (return on investments) for the sponsors?
- Include on the conference website a detailed conference program.
- Consider engaging with a Professional Conference Organizer (PCO) that is specialized in virtual events
- Post-event engagement
  - Maintain connection with participants
  - Highlight key event metrics
  - Feature advancements in relevant field
  - Thank speakers and participants

- Showcase exhibitors and sponsors
- Spotlight media and social media buzz about the event
- Inform participants about next year event
- Poll participants on expectations for next year
- Attract sponsors and exhibitors for the next event

## Organizing Hybrid Events

**Things to consider when switching conference to a Hybrid format:**
- Consider all the items from the underline virtual events.
- Inform participants in advance so that they are aware that they can still present their work even if they cannot physically attend the conference.
- It is paramount that the conference website is updated at all times to inform the in-person and virtual participants about the events/talks of the day
- When scheduling keynote talks, consider the different time zones of the majority of the conference participants. e.g. 1:00 p.m UTC is a good time for most time zones.
- Have plenty of volunteers that can update the talks and current events from the in-person conference to allow access for the virtual participants in a timely fashion.
- How will the virtual participants interact (ask questions) with the in-person talks? And vice versa.
- Consider engaging with a Professional Conference Organizer (PCO) that is specialized in hybrid events.
- For all vendors (e.g., conference centres, hotels, PCOs, venues for social events, etc.), let IEEE negotiate terms that minimize financial commitments and fines in case the event cannot happen as an in-person event.

## Budget, Finances, and Registration Fees for Financially Sponsored or Co-sponsored Conferences

Between April and October, 2019 conference registration fees across IEEE Societies were between 0% and 70% of pre-COVID-19 registration fees. These guidelines intend to offer a recommendation across all RAS-sponsored conferences and are not a policy that IEEE or RAS will enforce.

While it is reasonable to offer low registration rates, your event offers a lot of benefits - for example, high-quality conference proceedings - to your attendees.

It is also important to understand that the cost for virtual conferences is almost independent of the number of attendees. This is different from hybrid and in-person conferences.

Across IEEE, it has shown that a good and fair compromise is at **20-30% of pre-COVID-19 registration fees (in absolute numbers $150-$350)**. In addition, the use of **symbolic fees for students** (e.g., $25 or $50) is encouraged. This will allow students from all regions of the world to learn, interact and communicate with one another.

Please also consider working with sponsors to get even more support for your event (e.g., career fairs).