RCO Virtual Meetings Best Practices:

Hosting a virtual meeting

We cannot endorse any particular web platform for holding virtual meetings. However, many organizations have found using ZOOM to be user-friendly with lots of information and technical assistance information on their website: https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html#events You can find tips on hosting a digital event as well as explore options for hosting.

Zoom "Pro" **meetings** cost $14.99/month/host and will accommodate 100 people. A "business" subscription costs $19.99/month/host and allows for 300 participants. The subscription includes helpful tools such as "Q&A" where people can ask questions "live" and "polling" which allows the host to see live responses to questions posted in the meeting. (The free version is limited to 40 minutes.)

No matter what method your RCO uses, here are some best practices to keep in mind. Following these tips will help reduce stress for your organization and for your meeting attendees.

Special Considerations for meetings during crisis:

Understand how crisis may impact your attendees' ability to engage and process new information. According to the Center for Disease Control, *"People affected by a crisis take in information, process information and act on information differently than in non-crisis times."*

More than ever, it's important to plan your agenda and how you will conduct the meeting. Work to keep meetings under one hour, if possible. Avoid jargon and language residents won't be familiar with. Be sure to describe visuals on any slides for accessibility to those who may not be able to view them.

Before the Meeting

- Have a point person and a back-up person who understands how to moderate the meeting, admit attendees, share screens, settings, passwords, etc.
- Hold a pre-event practice rehearsal for those people in your organization who will be conducting the meeting. Encourage the applicants who will be presenting to also attend.
- **Determine roles**: (minimum 3 people recommended)
  - Host or facilitator welcomes attendees, guide content, discussion, posts, admit attendees.
  - Co-host can moderate chat comments, live and pre-submitted questions or comments, and handle technical issues.
  - Note-taker can take certain notes and/or be assigned as closed-caption note-writer.

- Determine a back-up plan ahead of time in case the site crashes, or something else happens to cause the meeting to not go ahead.
- **External communication**:
  - Notify any other affected RCOs and your membership in advance of the meeting and include instructions for how to access the meeting, including a call-in option if using a web-based meeting.
  - Post the applicant's presentation online before the meeting so that everyone, especially those who might attend the meeting using a phone, can see the images.
  - Outline how community members may submit comments to your RCO before, during and after the meeting, by mail, email or phone. Include a comment deadline that will allow your organization to assemble those comments and consider them in your RCOs decision.
  - Recording the meeting and posting it on your organization's website or Facebook page gives the community another way to provide informed comment after the meeting.

During the Meeting

- Open up the site at least 30 minutes ahead of time to make sure everything is working.
- Welcome participants and thank them for showing. If this is the first time your RCO is convening in a virtual format, acknowledge the stressful time you are all facing, in a way that feels appropriate for your audience.
- Introduce who is in the "room", the PURPOSE of this meeting, the role of the host organization, and how the meeting will be conducted.
- Set out ground rules for how everyone will interact and what will happen after the meeting. Set out time limits for presentations or commentary, and don't be afraid to cut people off if going over. Be consistent.
- Describe how your RCO will be communicating with the city about the results of the meeting. A voting process by participants is not required, but if that is how you normally record the results of the meeting, tell participants how that vote will be done.
- **Quick Zoom orientation**: include a slide or document to read aloud ZOOM housekeeping, such as how to engage during the meeting.
  - Explain "mute/unmute", and that the meeting will be recorded.
  - Explain how comments and questions will be taken and addressed- through the platform's tools such as chat box or Q&A, through separate email address, by unmuting someone, or other methods and how they will be used.
- If reading "live" questions or comments, announce who has asked or commented.
- Ask presenters (applicants) to announce who they are and what organization or client they represent.
- If going over the stated end time for the meeting, state what you will do as the host.
  - *"We're running late, but we're still going to end at XX:00.*
  - *"We're running late, but we're going to wrap up this final case. Feel free to provide comments after this meeting (how) if you can't stay with us."*

After the Meeting

- Summarize the meeting and your RCO's finding, using the letter template provided. Post the findings on your group's website and/or other ways you communicate with your membership.
- Discuss with your RCO planning team. How did the meeting go? What could be done differently next time to make it run more smoothly?
- Post the recording of the Zoom webinar or meeting. If you don't record it, you'll need to post the notes publicly, as you normally would.
- Ask your RCO membership to share how it went for them. Learn from your members. If you have the ability and time to do so, send a very brief survey to attendees to ask them how it could be done better, or any accessibility issues they had.
- Follow up with answers to any questions not answered during the meeting or that were submitted separately.

Blog: [Best Practices for Hosting a Digital Event](#)