



Inclusive Online Meeting Practices

In these current times, we are faced with the necessity to move meetings and gatherings to a socially-distanced, virtual space. Though this may be an adjustment from in-person meetings, we can still prioritize inclusion in our virtual workplace. The following is a list of suggested practices to center inclusion for digital group meetings.

Practices for Facilitators:

Create shared expectations of meeting time

Creating expectations allows for the group to understand the operational norms and community guidelines for shared virtual time together. Additionally, it can help minimize frustration, assist in communicating meeting values, and provide instructions for contributing to the discussion.

Assign roles for the meeting beforehand

As virtual meetings grow, so do the demands of effectively facilitating large meetings. Creating a virtual space which is free of unwanted attendees, while also centering accessibility by participants requires diligence and attention; consider designating individual roles to assist with required tasks in a virtual meeting.

Possible virtual roles include:

- Facilitator of meeting
- Cohost to assist with technology and remove participants, if necessary
- Moderator of the meeting who monitors chats and raising hands
- Note taker

Familial responsibilities

Recognize that participants have different familial expectations, demands, and responsibilities; thus, altering their individual ability to participate consistently in virtual spaces.

Adjust expectations to accommodate parental expectations, familial obligations, shared space, wifi demands, and others.

Be aware of contributions to the group

Extroverts and introverts often engage very differently, both in person and online. Since the goal of group meetings often includes gaining perspective and getting participant feedback, consider creating different opportunities for participants to contribute to the conversation.

For example:

- Utilize the chat function
- Utilize small group interaction



Provide materials ahead of time

By providing materials before a virtual meeting, it allows for participants to have a better understanding of both what is being discussed and how they can better prepare. Given familial obligations, participants might need additional time to prepare adequately for meetings.

Consider technology access of participants when planning activities

As you plan to create interactive opportunities in the virtual space, consider the technology requirements needed to access the materials. Questions to consider:

- Are all materials visual? Can individuals who are not able to utilize video still participate? Can people access this information later, when they have access to a computer?

Consider the individual needs of participants and mental health

Some of your zoom participants have been quarantined with others, while some are quarantined alone. Consider that some participants might need interaction and provide ways to accomplish this in your meeting.

Examples

- Stay on the call after if able for questions and check-ins
- Provide time for small groups to interact
- Acknowledge that this experience is different for many participants from the beginning – name the mental impact

Practices for Everyone:

- Respect others in the meeting by monitoring how much “space” you are using
- If you can, use video to display engagement, it helps others to know how you are experiencing the meeting
- Acknowledge your biases:
 - Seeing people’s homes
 - How they are dressed
 - How they are navigating technology (generational differences)
- Recognize the contributions of others to promote recognition and affirmation
- If your video is on... remember we can see you....