mn DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Running Virtual Meetings

The pandemic has brought about the need to think about work in a different context. Virtual meetings are becoming the new normal.

This document will provide ideas for running virtual meetings that can keep the interest of attendees and encourage their participation.

If you need assistance making meetings accessible, please see Running Accessible Remote Meetings.

Prior to the Meeting

It is important to prepare for the meeting ahead of time. Consider the following:

- Who should be invited to the meeting

- What platform will be used (Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Slack)

- Make sure there is a dial in option for those who may not be able to log in with a computer

- Get some help to run the meeting if possible. Some ideas include:

  - Producer – Runs the technology including muting and unmuting participants, helping people get online

  - Note Taker – Take notes (should not be the meeting facilitator or producer)

  - Facilitator – Provides structure for the meeting

- Ask participants if they have any agenda items they would like covered, and ask them to discuss the topic during the meeting

- Put the most important agenda items at the top of the list to ensure they are talked about. If the meeting gets side tracked the most pertinent topics will have been discussed first.

Send the meeting invitation in advance

- Make sure participants know the reason for the meeting

- Attach the agenda

- Ask participants to sign in at least five minutes early to make sure technology is working

- Ask participants to put their video on if technology and bandwidth allows

Sign in early to make sure technology is working and greet guests as they arrive.

Using Visual Aids

Visual aids are used to deep participants interest, convey a message or data, or to tell a story. When using visual aids during a virtual meeting:

- Presentations should be no longer than one hour

- Slides should contain pictures and plenty of white space. Adding a lot of wording to a slide can create confusion.

During the Meeting

- Establish ground rules for the meeting including:
  - Self-identify when speaking
  - Turn off e-mail and other distractions
  - Mute your phone or computer if not speaking
  - Follow the WAIT rule (Why Am I Talking)

- If you are recording the meeting, let participants know this

- Use and icebreaker or check in question. Use round robin for answers and call on each person so everyone has a chance to participate.

- For meetings with a large number of participants ask them to answer a check in question using an emoji or check mark or an X. For example, "Please use an emoji to tell us how you are doing today."

- Orient participants to the reason for the meeting

- Use document or screen sharing so participants can follow along with what is being discussed

- Use different engagement tools to keep participants engaged (see Ten Ideas for Virtual Meeting Engagement below)

Ending the Meeting

End the meeting on time to be respectful of the participant's other commitments. Make sure to summarize what was discussed. Send the notes and next steps after the meeting.

If there is a producer or facilitator, ask them to stay on after the meeting or set a time to debrief how the meeting was conducted.

Ten Ideas for Virtual Meeting Engagement

There are a variety of virtual platforms that have tools to help keep virtual meeting participants engaged and encourage participation. Here are ten favorites and the platforms that use each one:

1. Assign attendees to agenda items

2. Round robin question

3. Polling (Skype, WebEx, Zoom)

4. Q&A and Chat (Skype, WebEx, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack) – Ask participants to type a question into the Q&A or Chat box

5. Slides (see Using Visual Aids)

6. Document Sharing (Skype, WebEx, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack) – Share a document you would like participants to discuss at the meeting.

7. Whiteboard – Allows participants to write answers on a whiteboard rather than speak. They can draw pictures or type. (Skype, WebEx, Zoom)

8. Annotations – Allows participants to type or write on the presenter's slides (Skype, WebEx, Zoom)

9. Breakout sessions (WebEx, Zoom)

10. Change participant backgrounds – Allows the participant to select fun backgrounds like a beach or a classroom (Microsoft Teams) or fade out their background so no one sees their home.

If you are running a virtual meeting, schedule a test meeting with co-workers and try out the different features in whatever virtual platform you may be using.

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