

# VIRTUAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



# MAINTAINING OPEN MEETINGS

## HOW CAN YOU ENSURE YOUR MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC?

- Post meeting notice and corresponding agenda at least one week before the scheduled meeting. Emergency meetings may be held, but must be advertised 24 hours before and meeting notes must indicate what constituted the emergency.
- Decide on a meeting format - live stream, conference call, webinar - and appropriate tool. Live streaming can be paired with other communication tools, such as Twitter or a live conference line, but this needs to be well communicated to the public ahead of time.
- If possible, incorporate registration features and/or surveys to capture email addresses, demographic data, and zip code. This can help you follow up with participants and better understand who you are reaching.
- Create a promotion strategy, allowing enough time and range of channels for promotion.
- Offer a call in option and consider how you promote the meeting outside of internet channels, especially if hosting a meeting in areas with limited broadband or internet access.
- Create an opportunity to receive any public comments via email before, during, after the meeting to replicate a public comment period. This should be well communicated.
- If possible, record the meeting and post online afterwards.
- Capture and analyze analytics of online engagement in order to be able to share lessons learned and improve over time.
- Consider holding off on any major action items until an in-person meeting can be conducted, if at all possible and reasonable.
- Check with your City or County legal counsel for further guidance.

# HOSTING VIRTUAL MEETINGS

HOW CAN YOU ENSURE YOUR MEETING IS ENGAGING FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS?

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- Develop and provide a meeting agenda ahead of time.
- Identify a moderator ahead of time. It is especially important for virtual meetings to have a moderator to lead the call and manage introduction of presenters, participant questions, etc.
- While waiting for everyone to get on the call, encourage participants to grab a glass of water or a pen and paper to be more comfortable.
- Make the purpose and goal of the meeting clear at the beginning.
- Begin the meeting with an interactive poll when possible. This will help you see how many on the call are engaged in the discussion and will allow you to “check in” with participants.
- Create opportunities for interactivity throughout the meeting.
- If the meeting is long, schedule breaks to keep participants focused and engaged.
- Use the interactive chat box throughout the meeting to help keep participants engaged. This can also help presenters clarify points along the way if questions arise.
- Offer high quality visuals, including images, videos, graphs, and maps.
- Be concise when speaking. Plan what you will say ahead of time, but keep your voice engaging.
- Keep meeting conversational between presenters if setting allows.

# HOSTING VIRTUAL MEETINGS

## HOW CAN YOU MINIMIZE POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH TECHNOLOGY?

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- Identify a person to support technology trouble-shooting ahead of time. This should not be the moderator, as that will slow down the meeting.
- Test the technology ahead of time. If you are using presenters for a major meeting, host a test run for them prior to the meeting.
- Offer a brief guide to the technology at the beginning of the meeting, or send some tips out in an email before the meeting. This may include how to mute yourself and how to ask questions or make comments.
- Ask participants to mute themselves during meeting unless they are talking.
- If bandwidth seems limited, ask participants to turn off their video camera if not talking.
- Ask participants ahead of time to use computer audio if possible, as cell phones have more background noise/reception issues.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL

## HOW CAN YOU EFFECTIVELY ADAPT YOUR MEETING TO A VIRTUAL FORMAT?

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When planning a virtual meeting, consider the desired purpose, size, and level of interactivity to help choose which tool or combination of tools to use. With any meeting where feedback is being solicited, be sure to offer opportunities to submit comments for some period after the meeting via a survey link, email, or phone. When using a video conferencing tool, spend some time familiarizing yourself with both the operational as well as the security features of the tool to avoid unwanted interruptions during your meeting. The suggestions that follow are only some of the ways to host virtual meetings – there may be many other creative ways to combine tools to achieve your desired outcome. It's always a good idea to work with your planning, GIS, communications, and legal staff in making these types of decisions. Please note that the companies and resources listed here have no affiliation with ARC.

## RESOURCES

[Transparency in the Time of Coronavirus - Georgia First Amendment Foundation](#)

[A Crash Course in Translating Your Process to a Virtual Setting - Digital Visual Facilitation](#)

[Adaptive Engagement Tool Ideas - International Association for Public Participation](#)

[100 Ideas to Help Engage Your Community Online - Bang the Table](#)

[3 Tips and Tricks for a Great Virtual Meeting - Dpict](#)

[7 Tips for Designing Successful Virtual Meetings - Meridian Institute](#)

[10 Tips for Improving Our Online Meetings - Consensus Building Institute](#)

[Telework in the Time of COVID-19 \(Webinars\) - Georgia Commute Options](#)

[How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event - Zoom](#)

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL

HOW CAN YOU SELECT A TOOL THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS?

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## GETTING FEEDBACK FROM STEERING COMMITTEES

**Are you hosting a steering committee meeting whose primary purpose is sharing information with and gaining feedback from 5-25 participants?** You might consider hosting your meeting on a **video conferencing platform**, such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEx, or Skype, which would allow participants to see and hear each other, but also allows a host to offer a presentation through screen-sharing. Try combining the video call with a **polling tool**, such as Participoll, Mentimeter, or Poll Everywhere, or a **survey platform**, such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, if you want to receive feedback after the meeting.

## COLLABORATING WITH STEERING COMMITTEES

**Are you hosting a steering committee meeting whose primary purpose is collaborating with 5-25 participants?** If you are hosting a meeting that involves real-time collaboration, any **video conferencing platform**, such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEx, or Skype, will be a good place to start. You can also use **tools that allow for simultaneous editing** of documents, such as Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive. If your project involves a spatial component, try integrating **mapping tools** like Social Pinpoint or Maptionnaire into your meeting, allowing participants to place comments on online maps.

## SHARING STATIC INFORMATION WITH THE PUBLIC

**Are you sharing regular or updated static information about changes to a service, plan, or project?** To share static information with the public, consider posting a **slide deck** or **pre-recorded video** on your website to be shared via **social media**. You can also share information through **e-newsletters** and **blog posts**. If your information lends itself to mapping, try creating an ArcGIS StoryMap to embed on your website.

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## GETTING FEEDBACK FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Are you hosting a meeting whose primary purpose is gaining insight from stakeholders or subject matter experts?** If you are conducting stakeholder interviews, consider completing those via **individual phone or video calls**. If you are hosting a focus group where stakeholders will interact with each other, any **video conferencing platform**, such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEx, or Skype, will work. Feedback from stakeholders can also be obtained via **survey platforms**, such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, and **mapping tools**, such as Social Pinpoint, Maptionnaire, or ArcGIS Public Comment.

## HOSTING ONLINE TOWN HALLS

**Are you hosting a town hall meeting whose primary purpose is sharing information with and gaining feedback from up to 1000 participants?** A town hall can be hosted online by **livestreaming** via Facebook Live, LinkedIn Live, or Periscope, all of which allow for live comments and questions. You could also host a **webinar** through a platform like GoToWebinar with live polling embedded and time scheduled for participants to submit questions through the comment feature.

## FACILITATING VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSES

**Are you hosting an open house whose primary purpose is sharing information with and gaining feedback from up to 1000 participants?** Information that would be presented at an open house can be shared through **livestream** or a **pre-recorded video** of a slide deck. Alternatively, the information can be translated into **web content**, allowing attendees to browse on their own time. Either option can be combined with a **survey platform**, such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, or a **mapping tool**, such as Social Pinpoint, Maptionnaire, or ArcGIS Public Comment.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL

HOW CAN YOU SELECT A TOOL THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS?

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## ONLINE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS

Borealis  
76ENGAGE  
jambo  
Bang the Table  
PublicInput.com  
MetroQuest

## STREAMING TOOLS

Instagram Live  
Facebook Live  
LinkedIn Live  
Periscope  
YouTube  
Vimeo

## MULTICASTING TOOLS

StreamYard  
Hovercast  
Switcher Studio

## COLLABORATION TOOLS

Google Hangouts  
Microsoft Teams  
Microsoft OneDrive  
Google Drive

## MAPPING TOOLS

ArcGIS Public Comment  
ArcGIS Environmental Impact  
Polling  
ArcGIS StoryMap  
Social Pinpoint  
Maptionnaire

## SURVEY AND INTERACTIVE POLLING TOOLS

Survey Monkey  
Poll Everywhere  
Mentimeter  
Participoll  
Survey Gizmo  
Google Forms

## CONFERENCING TOOLS

Zoom  
miro  
GoToMeeting  
Cisco WebEx  
Skype

## OTHER TOOLS

EveryoneOn  
GoToWebinar