

PRACTICES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE TIME OF COVID

Salt Lake City Civic Engagement Team



INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has rapidly changed all of our lives in profound ways. Public participation and public engagement also have changed. This is a Guide of Best Practices for Engagement in the Time of COVID-19. Included are resources for online and traditional (but adapted) engagement. We would like to thank and acknowledge engagement professionals around the world for their contributions included in this guide, specifically Susanna Haas Lyons, Kim Hyshka, Chrystiane Mallaley, Michael Sauvé among others, and International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) USA and IAP2 Canada. Much of this guide is adapted from hosted webinars the week of March 23-27, 2020.

This guide can also be given to consultants to help with engagement during COVID-19.

For questions about this Guide or assistance in implementing its practices, please contact the Civic Engagement Team.

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BEST PRACTICES

'NORMAL' FOR NOW

This guide will help you navigate engagement during COVID-19

ENGAGEMENT PLANNING

OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

Good quality engagement follows the same principles, whether online or offline. Communities work best when residents, businesses, and institutions are engaged and working together. The goal is always to improve outreach and participation for better informed decision-making. It's clear that many of these strategies will evolve during this period. Updates will be made as needs and improvements are identified. Finally, there is no one right way to do this, it's okay to fail and learn from mistakes. Be patient and flexible with technology, yourself and others—we're all learning and adapting and we're all in this together.

Involving the public early and on the appropriate level helps create buy-in, both in the process and the final decision. Assume that all projects will be Inform at a minimum.

CONSULT

- Get ideas on specific number of options or priorities.
- Take public feedback on project, proposal, or other issue.
- ex. Proposing a change to street lane markings

INVOLVE

- Interactive process though out the entire project.
- Creating a process that ensures public concerns and hopes are heard, understood, and considered.
- ex. Proposing a roundabout in a neighborhood

COLLABORATE

- Interactive process, incorporating recommendations as much as possible.
- Partner with the public to develop alternatives and identify preferred solutions.
- ex. Writing a new master plan

Source: IAP2 International Federation 2018

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

COVID-19 has essentially catalyzed an overnight shift to conduct almost all engagement online. Below are resources and points to keep in mind during this new time of almost exclusive online engagement.

ONLINE MEETINGS, PRESENTATIONS & WEBINARS

HAVE A CALL-IN OPTION

ESTABLISH ONLINE DISCUSSION GUIDELINES/PROCESS AGREEMENTS

- All participants keep video on (but mute unless speaking) as much as possible
- All participants close other windows and applications to get the benefits of full participation
- Other traditional "process agreements," or ground rules (the following developed by Michele Straube of the [EDR Program at University of Utah](#))
 - » Respect each other
 - * Listening is important
 - * One person speaks at a time

ONLINE MEETINGS CONTINUED

- * No interrupting
- » Respect the group
 - * Every idea is worthy
 - * Make your points succinctly
 - * Everyone has an equal right to talk
- » It is OK to disagree – agreeably
 - * Challenge ideas, not people
 - * No “zingers” or cheap shots
 - * Disagreement is an opportunity to learn
- » Keep the conversation productive
 - * Explain your reasoning
 - * Keep an open mind
 - * Avoid passing judgment
- » Be responsible for the energy you bring into the room

Source: Michele Straube

For Zoom meetings in general, and especially open public meetings on Zoom, beware of “zoombombing” when uninvited attendees break into and disrupt your meeting. To disable most of these features, click on the gear-shaped Settings icon on the upper-right side of the page after you’ve logged in. From there, you’ll see the option to turn off most of the listed features (see Zoom tip box on next page for more information).

ROLES FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

1. Facilitator
2. Technical Lead
3. Note-taker
4. Contact person for solving tech problems in the moment
5. Participants
6. Subject matter experts

KEEP IN MIND FOR LARGE MEETINGS (50 OR MORE PEOPLE)

- Reduce video/screen sharing to the presenter as this takes up a lot of bandwidth
- Besides the host, assign a moderator (or two) to monitor chat comments, turn people’s microphones on and off, etc.

MUST DO’S FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

TECHNOLOGY



PROCESS



Source: Susanna Haas Lyons 2020

ALWAYS NOTIFY PARTICIPANTS BEFORE STARTING RECORDING

START THE MEETING WITH A CHECK IN

- Small groups: by voice
- 10-20: by chat or share an image
- 20+: by a poll

ZOOM TIPS & TRICKS



Don't use your [Personal Meeting ID](#) for the meeting. Instead, use a per-meeting ID, exclusive to a single meeting. Zoom's support page offers a video [walk-through on how to generate a random meeting ID](#) for extra security.



Enable the "Waiting Room" feature so that you can see who is attempting to join the meeting before allowing them access.



Disable other options, including the ability for others to Join Before Host (it should be disabled by default, but check to be sure). Then disable screen-sharing for nonhosts, and also the remote control function. Finally, disable all file transferring, annotations and the autosave feature for chats.

EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

CONSIDER EQUITY

- Record online meetings for people to watch it on their own time
- Translate online meetings into relevant languages
- Center marginalized voices
 - » Recognize the privileges of people in the organizing group
 - » Understand level of trust with the organizing group
 - » Understand level of comfort engaging online (with prevalence of anonymous/bigoted comments)
 - » Clearly define and communicate roles and engagement approach
 - » Take the time to invest in relationship-building
 - » Consider impact of data privacy
 - » Find solutions to increase computer/internet access

Source: Susanna Haas Lyons 2020

CONSIDER ACCESSIBILITY WITH WEBPAGES AND MEETINGS/VIDEOS

- Provide American Sign Language (ASL) and subtitles/closed captioning options for people who are deaf/hard of hearing
- Provide image descriptions for people who are blind/use screen readers (screen readers can't interpret images and must rely on text to read out loud the information on the page)
- Reference "[Writing with Web Accessibility in Mind](#)" and [Webaim.org](#) for more information

ONLINE OUTREACH PLATFORMS & METHODS

E-MAIL/E-NEWSLETTER

- Platforms include [Constant Contact](#), [SalesForce Email Studio](#), [EveryAction](#), [MailChimp](#), etc.

WEBSITES

- Organization/Project Pages; pages like [slc.gov](#)
- Blogs; blogs like [gastronomicslc.com](#)
- Polling; platforms like [Poll Everywhere](#), [Mentimeter](#), polls within virtual meeting
- Surveys; platforms like [Qualtrics](#), [Survey123](#)
- Budget Engagement; platforms like [A Balancing Act](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Advertising: If there is budget and ability to, it can be worth promoting social media posts to get a bigger reach and/or “geotag”/“geofence” (target posts to a specific geographic area)

- Facebook — [Facebook Live “Virtual Workshop or Town Hall”](#)
- Instagram — [Instagram Live/Stories](#)
- Twitter — [#AsktheMayor Twitter Q&A](#)
- Nextdoor — [SLC Sugar House Neighborhood](#)
- Reddit — [AMA](#)

MAPS & STORYBOARDS

- Map Example — [SLC Bond Street Reconstruction Map](#)
- Story Map Example — [SLC Transit](#)

VIRTUAL MEETING PLATFORMS

[CISCO WEBEX](#)

Pros: Has polling feature; “raise hand” feature; users can use the same link for future meetings; meetings are easily recordable

Cons: Not the best interface; difficult for moderator to share screen and monitor chat comments simultaneously; must save chat comments manually

[MICROSOFT TEAMS](#)

Pros: Good interface; can share screen, see participant video, and see chat comments simultaneously; saves chat comments continuously/automatically; background blur feature

Cons: May not be able to record video meetings; no in-meeting poll feature

[ZOOM](#)

Pros: Good interface; users can create recurring meetings and use the same link for future meetings; raise hand feature; Q&A and polling feature; meetings are easily recordable; breakout rooms feature; closed captioning feature



DESIRABLE FEATURES OF VIRTUAL MEETING TOOLS

- MULTIPLE PRESENTERS
- SCREEN SHARING FOR AUDIO-VISUALS
- MUTE & UNMUTE PARTICIPANTS
- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS
- LIVE POLLS
- PARTICIPANT CHAT (PUBLIC & PRIVATE)
- IN-SESSIONS DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION
- DOWNLOAD CHAT RECORD
- RECORD AUDIO & VIDEO OF SESSION
- SIMPLE TO ACCESS (NO DOWNLOADS OR LOGINS)
- SECURE (CAN RESTRICT PARTICIPANT ACTIONS AND DOES NOT SHARE DATA WITHOUT APPROVAL)

Source: Susanna Haas Lyons 2020

Cons: Free account is limited (no breakouts, 40-minute sessions for 3-100 participants, etc); must set controls to avoid “zoombombing” and trolls

SKYPE

Pros: Usable on any device with a camera (phone, computer, tablet); features include screen sharing, PowerPoint integration, video recording, background blur for speaker and chat links for people who do not use Skype.

Cons: Limit to 50 participants; fee for call in Skype numbers

The graphic below features more ideas for online engagement depending on the level you are engaging.



INFORM

INFORM TOOLS...

- ☐ SOCIAL MEDIA
- ☐ PAID DIGITAL/SOCIAL ADVERTISING
- ☐ PESO WEB CONTENT
- ☐ WEBINARS

(FACEBOOK/IG, GOOGLE/BING, TWITTER, LINKEDIN)



CONSULT

INFORM TOOLS AND...

- ☐ ONLINE SURVEYS
- ☐ PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH
- ☐ FOCUS GROUPS
- ☐ FACEBOOK/TWITTER POLL FUNCTIONS
- ☐ SUBMISSIONS
- ☐ TELEPHONE TOWN HALLS
- ☐ SOCIAL LISTENING
- ☐ TRENDS RESEARCH

(SURVEYMONKEY, SLIDO, WEB-PANELS)



INVOLVE

INFORM + CONSULT TOOLS AND...

- ☐ FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM LIVE
- ☐ TWITTER (PERISCOPE)
- ☐ VIDEO CONFERENCES
- ☐ ENGAGEMENT HUB
- ☐ WORKBOOKS
- ☐ SMS/E-MAIL

(MAILCHIMP, ZOOM, SKYPE, ENGAGEMENTHQ, HUSTLE)



COLLABORATE

INFORM, CONSULT + INVOLVE TOOLS AND...

- ☐ DOCUMENT SHARING
- ☐ DISCUSSION THREADS
- ☐ CHAT
- ☐ WORKING SESSIONS
- ☐ 1-ON-1 CONVERSATIONS

(MAILCHIMP, SLACK, GOOGLE, ADOBE CONNECT)

Source: Kim Hyshka, Chrystiane Mallaley, and Michael Sauvé 2020

TRADITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

As mentioned previously, due to COVID-19, organizations are largely switching to online engagement instead of in-person engagement. This online only engagement creates a ‘digital divide,’ an uneven distribution in the access to, use of, or impact of information for a large number of people who do not have access to e-devices and/or the internet. During the time of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to bridge the digital divide and engage people who do not have online access. However, it is especially difficult to do this now that many traditional methods of engaging this group and other marginalized populations (in-person at libraries, schools, community & recreation centers, community events) are not available. The following are traditional, though sometimes adapted, outreach methods that can be used during this time.

TRADITIONAL OUTREACH METHODS

TRADITIONAL OUTREACH METHODS

- Set up hotlines/phone trees for organizations and projects
- Include a call-in/phone option for all meetings and engagement
 - » Audio services like [FreeConferenceCall.com](https://www.freeconferencecall.com)
- Use text message (SMS) services like [CitiBot](#), [Hustle](#), [Textizen](#)
- Mail physical postcards, flyers to households
- Include information on mailed utility bills
- Build/post information on physical neighborhood message boards
- Engage physically if the geographic area is small
 - » Offer DVDs with recorded video presentations and paper surveys for those who cannot access online presentations and surveys
 - » Canvass the neighborhoods and businesses with door hangers to invite them to participate
- Partner with local community organizations and nonprofits contacting most vulnerable groups and residents via phone, mail, flyers, paid neighborhood/community ambassadors
 - » Research local organizations giving out hotspots and devices to leaders from marginalized communities
- Work with trusted community leaders (church leaders, youth mentors) to disseminate information through their networks via phone, mail, flyers, etc.
- Leverage the essential non-emergency services that are continuing (Meals on Wheels, grocery stores, pharmacies, food banks, school districts distributing food) to disseminate information
- Use traditional media
 - » Local radio stations, including non-English languages like Spanish radio stations
 - » Public access TV
 - » Physical newspapers

DIGITAL DIVIDE 5 'A'S OF TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

Availability

To whom is the technology (un)available

Affordability

To whom is the technology (un)affordable

Awareness

Who is (un)aware of the technology?

Abilities

Who has the digital literacies to use the technology?

Agency

Who has the self-efficacy to make use of the technology?

Source: Tony Roberts & Kevin Hernandez 2019

RESOURCES TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

[Xfinity WiFi Hotspot Access](#) is free nationwide during COVID-19. Call: 1-800-934-6489

[Comcast](#) is offering new Internet Essentials customers two free months of Internet service if you apply by May 13, 2020. It's also increasing service speeds for new and existing customers. Call: 1-800-934-6489

[Verizon](#) announced two months of waived Internet and voice service charges for current Lifeline customers. The company also has new, affordable Internet options for low-income households. Call: 1-800-837-4966

[PCs for People](#) offers low-cost Wi-Fi hotspots/computers to qualifying households. They accept [Pell Grant](#) documentation for eligibility for higher education students impacted by COVID school closures. Call: 651-354-2552

COVID-19 RESOURCES

[AARP COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS](#)

[CIVIC TECH PUBLIC INPUT AND ENGAGEMENT TOOLS](#)

[GOVTECH RESOURCE GUIDE FOR GOVERNMENT LEADERS](#)

[LEARNING FOR NATURE VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT GUIDE](#)

[NLC LOCAL ACTION TRACKER](#)

[NTEN DIGITAL DIVIDE RESOURCES](#)

[NDIA RESOURCES](#)

[IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION RESOURCES](#)

[IAP2 CANADA DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL MEDIA & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION](#)