Best Practices
for Inclusive Remote Meetings

Remote meetings have recently become the new normal for sharing information and conducting other important daily work across the scientific enterprise. Many practices needed for productive and inclusive in-person meetings are even more critical for successful remote meetings, which require additional responsibilities of meeting hosts. The AGU Ethics and Equity Center recommends these best practices to support inclusive meetings and better assure that your meetings are successful for all participants.

10 Best Practices
for Inclusive Remote Meetings

1. Schedule the meeting by considering time zones for all participants.

2. Share a meeting agenda with the meeting objective.

3. Make sure all participants know who is on the call.

4. Alert all participants if the meeting is being recorded.

5. Facilitate the meeting, if you are the meeting host, by staying on time and on task with the items on the agenda while also monitoring requests to be recognized.

6. Avoid allowing one or two people to dominate the discussion and give everyone a chance to participate.

7. Solicit opinions or feedback by inviting the least senior members to share input first.

8. Know that "private chats" are not private so keep all comments respectful and treat them as if they could be read by anyone.

9. Recognize unconscious bias and prepare a decision grid with clear criteria in advance of decision-making meetings.

10. Ensure that any action items from the meeting are captured and communicated as soon as practical after the meeting.

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Additional Best Practices
for Inclusive Remote Meetings

Host Responsibilities:

Before the Meeting

- Be aware of and sensitive to time zone differences for scheduling your meeting. Some meetings have participation from across the globe.

- Prepare and share the agenda in advance as the host. Develop a simple set of expectations for professional and respectful participation (e.g., turn-taking, use of virtual participation tools) and share along with the agenda.

- If this is a decision-making meeting, be aware of unconscious bias, and prepare a decision grid with clear criteria in advance.

During the Meeting

1. State the meeting objective at the meeting opening, reminding people of the agenda and shared expectations for professionalism.

2. Make sure all participants are aware of who is on the call. Practice self-introductions, or a quick roll call if the call involves a larger group. Offer to change phone numbers to attendee names for those who call in rather than join in over the computer.

3. Proactively alert all participants if the meeting is being recorded and remind them that "private chats" are not private. Private message chat history on most virtual platforms is saved and visible to the host. Keep all comments respectful.

4. Avoid allowing one or two persons to dominate the discussion to afford broader participation. If time allows, call on those you have not heard from.

5. Actively facilitate the meeting, attending to the time and items on the agenda. Remote meetings require more intentional facilitation. Use the electronic facilitation tools to monitor requests to be recognized.

   - Be sure to credit people for their ideas. Research suggests women and under-represented racial/ethnic group members don't always get acknowledged for their ideas but instead those ideas are credited to other meeting members.

   - Be sure to attend to patterns of interruption; attendees who are more dominant may be especially likely to interrupt under-represented group members. If you notice this pattern, invite the person who was interrupted to continue/share their ideas.

   - Recognize that non-verbal reactions may feel disjointed and "lag" in remote conversations. It may take people more time to process information when attention is divided between managing the conversation and navigating the technological interface for the meeting. It may be important to let people revisit earlier points in the conversation to afford ample time to process and respond in a remote environment.

   - Try to identify or at least recognize all chat comments and indicate how they will be addressed (parking lot, addressed later, or responded to).

6. If facilitating a group larger than 10-15 participants, consider appointing a co-host to the meeting who can track and respond to chat comments and alert you to requests to be recognized or important concerns raised in chat dialogues.

7. When seeking opinions or feedback, invite the least senior members to share input first; when more senior voices offer opinions first, more junior colleagues may find it difficult to offer divergent perspectives.

8. Be comfortable with pauses. Some attendees may have slower technology; those on the phone may have more difficulty identifying pauses to join the conversation. Allowing pauses in the conversation ensures people have a chance to contribute.

9. When meetings require decision making, call a vote only when you are confident everyone has had an opportunity to participate. Defer decisions to a future meeting if needed to ensure inclusive participation.

10. Start and end the meeting on time. Respect participants' schedules and likely additional commitments. If the meeting needs to run longer than scheduled, check with participants for agreement to do so.

After the Meeting

- Ensure that any action items from the meeting are captured and communicated as soon as practical after the meeting.

- Follow up with individuals who were unable to attend to invite their perspective on key topics/issues.

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Participant Responsibilities:

Before the Meeting

- Know your virtual conferencing tools. Hosting, privacy, participation and recording features are designed to support inclusive participation.

- Be prepared with any requested pre-work.

During the Meeting

1. Join the meeting on time and know your computer system and the videoconferencing tools so you can adjust volume, cameras, etc. easily to address bandwidth challenges when they arise.

2. Close other programs in the background that you may wish to keep private (e.g., webpages, email, twitter) should you be invited to share your screen during the meeting. Mute your phone/device during presentations.

3. Be aware of teleconference etiquette: assume that your video camera is on, even if you believe that it is not, and remember to keep conversations professional.

4. Use participation tools (e.g., "raise hand") to ask to be recognized when you want to add a comment. Use chat tools to add resources that you wish to share with the group. These practices promote inclusive participation. Especially in larger meetings, keep comments succinct and to the point, to allow others to participate.

5. Avoid the temptation to multi-task during the meeting; visible signs of distraction may send the wrong signal that you do not value others' contributions.

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