

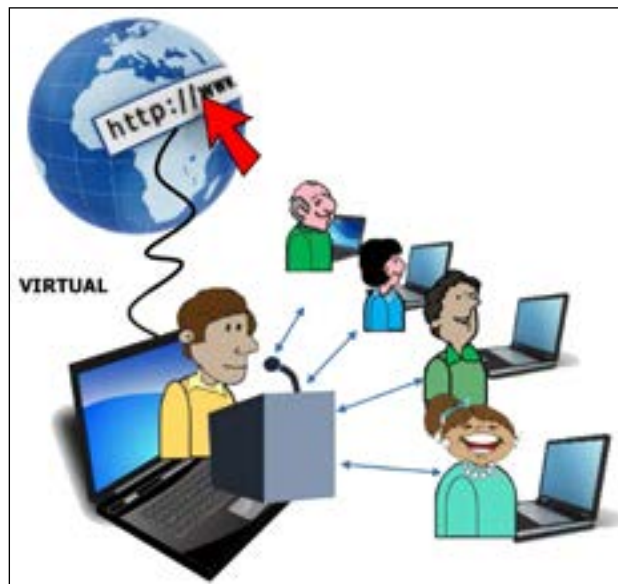
SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS TIP

Hosting Successful Virtual Meetings

By Sherri Wormstead

Virtual meetings are a great way to work. They also provide an alternative to travel, reduce costs and greenhouse gas emissions, engage partners at different locations, and increase work-life flexibility. Here are some tips on planning and hosting virtual meetings.

- **Start planning early for outcomes:** Allow time to plan the agenda and logistics as you would for a face-to-face meeting. Identify decisions, ideas, or input you want from the meeting.
- **Plan the agenda and use of Web tools:** Consider how you will engage participants during the meeting. Use Web tools, such as webcams, chat dialogue, poll pods, and whiteboards, to help keep participants engaged. For longer meetings, build in breaks.
- **Prepare participants:** In advance, send the agenda and any prework. As you start the meeting, set expectations for participants, e.g., silence cell phones or other notifications, participate fully and resist the temptation to multitask (e.g., no checking e-mail), listen to learn and understand.
- **Consider accessibility:** For suggestions, see the [Tips for Hosting Accessible Virtual Events](https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/greening-your-events) on the Forest Service Web site.
- **Virtual dream team:** It helps to have a meeting team including content facilitator, technology host, chat moderator, note taker, and timekeeper. For virtual teams, assign or rotate roles to team members.
- **Dry run:** Walk through the technology with meeting facilitators and presenters ahead of time.
- **Manage audio:** Ask participants to keep their phone lines unmuted (so they can easily speak up). Make sure the host knows how to manage the conference lines (e.g., mute lines if there is noise). Position a speaker phone in front of you but not next to a projector or computer cooling vent.
- **Switch up the format often:** Change how you engage participants every 10 minutes or so to keep them focused and to address different learning styles, e.g., hold webcam discussion, then brainstorm on whiteboard, then ask for input in poll pod, etc.
- **Facilitate for balanced participation:** Keep track of who has spoken and then call on those who haven't (in a conversational way) to provide air time for all.
- **Capture ideas, decisions, and actions on the screen:** This allows participants to check that their ideas have been captured, see decisions the group has made, and to correct any errors.
- **Evaluate and follow up:** After the meeting send out notes and followup tasks, and ask for feedback on the meeting.



(Adapted from <https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/greening-your-events>)

Get more resources on the [Greening Your Events](https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/greening-your-events) page on the Forest Service's Web site.

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