



# Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Meetings

## Meeting preparation:

- Provide background information, agenda, and connection instructions to all participants as early as possible so they can make necessary arrangements. Make agenda as detailed as possible - remote participants may not be as familiar with a topic as local groups. Remind participants to print out agenda with instructions and bring it to video-conference room. Include participant roles so people know what is expected of them. Post this information on a shared website if possible.
- Always provide a back-up plan, for example, if videoconference fails, have a telephone conference call number in reserve. Make sure all participants know the back-up plans.
- Schedule a practice session at least two days beforehand for new users. This allows time to troubleshoot the network if they can't connect. Test all the technologies that will be used for the live meeting in the configuration they are to be used.
- Have sites display their organization name in view of the camera or electronically using the built in capabilities of the videoconferencing system.
- Emphasize the importance of adaptability and patience when using technology and manage the expectations of the participants.
- Virtual meetings should be shorter in duration but held more frequently than face-to-face meetings.

## During the meeting:

- Connect at least ten minutes early; do not wait for the meeting start time to connect in case there are technical issues that need to be resolved.
- Review technology and protocols at the beginning of the meeting such as muting microphones, use of chat rooms, identifying who is speaking, etc.
- When using a videocamera, zoom in as tight as possible on the speaker. Taking maximum advantage of videoconferencing to see facial expressions

and non-verbal cues and feedback can greatly improve communication and sharing.

- Have sites introduce everyone who is in the room. If it is a new group, have each person give a brief introduction. To save time in a large or previously established group you can shorten this by reading a list of participants. It's important for people to know who is participating to establish group or project trust.
- Elicit comments/agreements/questions. Remote conferencing lacks the non-verbal feedback of face-to-face meetings. It's important to facilitate extra communication. Be explicit, ask the group or individuals if they understand or agree with what has been said. Ask specific individuals for feedback and comments. This will often open up fruitful discussions that would not occur otherwise.
- Delegate technical tasks (note taking, chat rooms, troubleshooting etc.). The meeting leader should not run the technologies. Provide an alternate method for participants to trouble-shoot (such as chat, email or text) so that the meeting is not disrupted by technical problems.
- Be cautious about saying or typing anything using the live-meeting technologies that would not be appropriate for all the participants to hear or read. Mistakes are easily made and can undermine group trust.
- Encourage participants to log-out of instant messenger programs and email clients when sharing desktops. This ensures privacy and improves attention to the meeting.

## After the meeting:

- Immediately email and post meeting minutes and action items. Ask for confirmation from people responsible for action items and follow-up tasks.

Comments, Feedback or Questions? Please contact [sservi-it@moonlight.arc.nasa.gov](mailto:sservi-it@moonlight.arc.nasa.gov)

