



DISCLAIMER: This document has been adapted based on the guidance on "How to Run Online Meetings and Workshops in the Time of COVID-19" from Resolves to Save Lives, under obtaining their approval.

CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE ONLINE COVID-19 INTRA-ACTION REVIEWS DURING THE PANDEMIC

1. Preparation



1.1 Identify the stakeholders and examine their needs

- Identify the smallest group of stakeholders with the relevant expertise, influence, authority, and resources to address the IAR's significant problems or decision-points, balancing inclusion with efficiency.
- Conduct the review in smaller groups (in parallel or sequentially) around a few focus issues or questions in breakout rooms and use the plenary session to share results and priority actions to allow the facilitation team to address the challenges more easily.
- Gather input in advance from stakeholders during the desk review and use the facilitator-led discussions to highlight and investigate major themes.

1.2 Select the online platform

- Choose the most appropriate platform to be used for the platform based on the needed functionalities.

1.3 Send preparatory materials in advance

- In the invitation, include relevant reading, videos and explanations of the virtual platform (and technical documents if applicable).
- Provide recommendations for an enhanced experience (e.g., join from a quiet place with a good internet connection, wear headphones or a headset during the session).

1.4 Delegate meeting coordination responsibilities

- Depending on the complexity of the event, designate one or more additional people to support the main presenter(s) with managing time, monitoring questions in the chat, taking notes and IT support.
- Create a plan and designate an IT specialist for managing unexpected technological issues. Be prepared to improvise and rely on each other to troubleshoot if you run into technological problems and make sure the contact details of this IT specialist are shared with all participants ahead of the activities.
- Create a parallel communication channel between facilitators, such as a separate chat group, which can enhance the communication efficiency and promptness during the activity.

1.5 Set up and practice

- Conduct a dry-run using relevant platform features in advance (e.g., breakout room, share screen, muting and unmuting participants, and polling features) under similar conditions as the actual session so you are familiarized with the platform features.
- Schedule an audio-visual technology check for facilitators 15 minutes before the event.

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2. Facilitation

2.1 Introduce technology that may be unfamiliar to the group

- Demonstrate the essential technological features on the online platform.
- Leverage technology to ease data collection, synthesis, and decision-making on the recommended activities arising from the IAR discussions.
- Establish a clear way for people to ask for help (e.g., chat, raise hand feature).

2.2 Establish housekeeping rules at the beginning

- Set the expectation that connectivity issues may impact the session.
- Propose housekeeping rules that the group can agree upon or build upon, e.g.:
 - *Use a headset or earplug with a microphone if available.*
 - *Do not use external speakers as they can create an echo.*
 - *Mute your microphone when not speaking.*
 - *Keep camera on when speaking (if connectivity allows)*
 - *Raise hands if wishing to speak.*
 - *Use and monitor the chat box.*
 - *Contact IT if technical issues arise.*

2.3 Design activities to engage people intellectually, emotionally and socially

- Consider the types of icebreakers for participants to get acquainted with each other and small group discussion (e.g., through breakout rooms) to help participants fully engage.
- Ask open-ended questions. Avoid binary (yes/no) questions that do not lead to deeper reflection (e.g., “How you can apply this principle in this situation?” instead of “Can this principle be applied in this situation?”)
- Accommodate people with different learning styles by relying on a mix of group activities (e.g., polls, chat discussions, breakout rooms) and self-led activities (e.g., timed reflection on specific prompts).
- Provide breaks every 60-90 mins to reduce fatigue and help people focus.

2.4 Verify that people do not feel disconnected or excluded

- Review participants’ profiles via questions in the registration form or in-session poll to understand them and tailor the session to their priorities and concerns.
- Check in with people who might appear disengaged; this might be happening because of technological difficulties. Make reasonable accommodations or offer alternatives if possible.
- Practice inclusion by inviting people who might feel like outsiders to share their ideas and pose any questions.

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3. Other tips for online engagement

3.1 Foster trust early in the session

Hearing from everyone in a group early in a session helps to foster trust.

- For groups larger than ten, offer a check in question in the chat (e.g., “What was your biggest learning today? What is still unclear to you?”) and get several responses in the chat box quickly.
- For groups smaller than ten, if you have adequate time, ask each person to unmute and share their learnings and feedback.

3.2 Using the polls feature for consensus

Use the poll feature to build consensus and to capture a snapshot of the progress of the session.

REFERENCES:

World Health Organization. (2020) Management and Facilitation of a Country COVID-19 Intra-Action Review (IAR). Available from: <https://openwho.org/courses/covid-19-intra-action-review-en>

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