

Participating in Virtual Stakeholder Meetings: Five Considerations



Participating in virtual stakeholder meetings opens doors to connect and engage with broader groups more frequently and in a more flexible manner, but it can also add additional challenges and considerations. This document includes five considerations to help participants fully engage in virtual stakeholder meetings. The accompanying tip sheet provides tips for before, during, and after the meeting.

1. Plan Ahead

While you do not have to worry about booking travel or commuting to an in-person meeting, it is still important to plan ahead when attending a virtual stakeholder meeting. It is especially important that you ensure you are familiar with the technology that will be used for the meeting, and that you have identified a space that will minimize distractions and allow you to fully engage with the meeting. There are many technology platforms that might be used to host a virtual meeting. Each platform has different functionalities, and they are continually evolving with new technological advances. Even if you are familiar with the technology being used, check that you are familiar with the features the host plans to use by reviewing any guidance they provide, including the activities highlighted in the agenda. In addition, as you would with any stakeholder meeting, it is important to review the agenda and meeting materials and gather input from others in your network. Coming to the meeting prepared can help maximize the limited time you have as a stakeholder group to work together.

2. Advocate for Your Needs

To ensure your participation in the meeting goes smoothly, share your needs with the host in advance. This is especially important if you need support for any accommodations to access the meeting. For the host to ensure that the meeting is accessible, you will need to ensure they are aware of your needs so that they can prepare. You may also find it helpful to work with the host to test or share any technology needs you identified as you prepared for the meeting or to share any questions or concerns you might have about the agenda.

3. Be Fully Engaged

When joining a meeting virtually, it can be easy to multitask or be interrupted by an unexpected distraction, but it is important that you treat a virtual stakeholder meeting the same way you would treat a face-to-face event. Protect your time, close other applications on your computer or device, find a quiet space, and commit your full attention and engagement to the meeting to both represent your perspective and to actively listen to what others share.

4. Be Patient With and Respectful of Others

Despite careful planning by the host and preparation by you in advance, potential challenges may result from reliance on technology (e.g., internet connection issues, background noise). Virtual meetings may increase the chance of misunderstandings occurring due to a lack of body language and difficulties in recognizing tone through the chat. To ensure that everyone feels respected and to minimize misunderstandings, follow the norms established for the meeting. Provide other participants with opportunities to engage in the conversation by actively listening and waiting to share your thoughts until after they have finished or by using the chat feature to add questions or considerations. Ask questions if you have difficulty hearing or need clarification on what the other participants have shared.

5. Provide Feedback

After the meeting, share input about your experience with the organizer to help them improve their efforts. Tell them about technology issues that were particularly frustrating or engagement strategies that worked well.