



Virtual Public Meeting Best Practices

Depending on whether you conduct your virtual public meeting or hearing as a live WebEx or a prerecorded video, it's important you guide the public through the whole experience from how you welcome participants to how you ask for their input. Remember: good quality engagement follows the same principles, whether online or offline for example basic etiquette on how you address the public. As always and more than ever, it is important to go above and beyond what is stated in the rules and our policy.

When scheduling and planning your virtual meeting remember:

Set up roles and assignments for the WebEx virtual meeting:

- Facilitator/Host – the person who will be the moderator of the meeting
- Panelists – some meetings and hearing may have additional subject matter experts speaking on topics such as Project SME or spokesperson
- Tech lead – if you are doing a live WebEx it is recommended to have someone who is responsible for running it as well as monitoring chat comments, speakers and live comments
- Note-taker – this person will take the minutes of the meeting as well as a log of comments

Please note that including embedded videos, polls, and visualizations can bog down bandwidth and cause lag(s) in the presentation or WebEx. You can direct the public the txdot.gov meeting or project page for those added features.

Just like an in-person public meeting or hearing, schedule a dress rehearsal or dry run to review materials and presenters can practice using the technology.

Have internal FAQ's available to assist with answering live questions in a prompt manner and consistent manner.

Understand and plan for target participants' access to hardware and Internet.

When starting your virtual meeting:

Consider providing the presentation on meeting or project page ahead of time, in case of technical difficulties.

As a host, presenter or panelist, make sure that your notifications are turned off for Outlook, Jabber, etc.

If hosting a WebEx, give guidance to the participants to turn their videos off and mute their microphones unless asked to unmute to speak.

In the introduction, clearly explain the meeting agenda, show how the chat feature works and provide details on how the commenting period. Highlight the comment period deadline and when the project information will be available.

Include a “Technology Moment.”. Some helpful tips include:

- Walk public through using the app or software
- Recommend using audio on computer if available
- Have all participants on mute when meeting starts or ask all participants to please mute their phones or audio
- Ask participants to turn their video function off to save bandwidth and prevent lagging between the presentation and audio

Go over the agenda.

During your presentation:

It is recommended that the WebEx is recorded. Before starting the recording advise the participants that the WebEx will be recorded and advise them to turn off the camera and mute microphones or phones. For the person recording the video make sure you are recording at full screen without the control pad on.

Give full attention to the participants as you would if you were in the same room. Don't be distracted by e-mail, Web surfing, or texting. Try not to eat or drink so you can be prepared for questions.

Move at a slightly slower pace than a typical meeting due to a two to three second delay for most systems to communicate.

When changing presenters if changing presentations, ask the other presenter or host if they can see your slides. This will ensure that the transition was smooth. Also, be sure to introduce each presenter before they begin.

If there is a technical difficulty, stay calm and do not panic. Communicate with your other presenting team members and/or tech lead to work through issue. Remember this is not the first time a technical difficulty has been experienced during a WebEx, and not the last. If there is a technical difficulty, stay calm and do not panic. Communicate with your other presenting team members and/or tech lead to work through issue. Remember this is not the first time a technical difficulty has been experienced during a WebEx, and not the last. Recommend including a slide that gives attendees instructions on where to find materials if there is a technical difficulty.

Do not interrupt others when they are speaking and be courteous to participants. Follow the same guidelines when answering questions at in-person meetings; offer to get information if you don't know the answer and don't take negative comments personally.

Make sure to give ample time when asking for comments or questions.

At the end of the comments download the chat record before closing meeting.