

POINT SOURCE YOUTH PRESENTS:

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL GATHERING

- *Kayla Monteiro, Associate Director, Events & Conferences, Point Source Youth*

A lot of our work in the youth homelessness space is dependent on coalition-building across movements. In recent months, we have had to shift the way we connect and learn from one another, resulting in a surge of online events. Virtual gatherings eliminate the majority of barriers people face when it comes to attending an in-person event, giving event organizers the opportunity to reach more people than ever before.

While it may be challenging to adapt to this new way of connecting, there are easy things you can do to make the experience fulfilling for you and your attendees. We want to share what we've learned along the way, so we've compiled our best practices for online events to share with partners and organizers.



5 TIPS FOR YOUR TEAM

1. Timing is key: When you make your meeting digital, distractions are much easier to come by for your attendees tuning in from home. What once could have been a successful 2-hour panel may no longer translate virtually. We recommend assessing your programming and making it as succinct as possible to make it easier for folks tuning in. We've trimmed down our panel sessions to be hour-long [webinars](#) and have found that to be an ideal timeframe to meaningfully engage our audience.

2. Provide technical video support for your speakers: We recommend testing the video platform you are hosting your event on with your speakers. This can be days before or 15-minutes before your online event starts. This ensures minimal technical difficulties during your meeting, and means you can use the fully allotted time to meaningfully engage in your programming, rather than troubleshooting at the start of your call. We also recommend providing best practices documentation on how to use the platform you have selected, so the quality of audio and video is consistent among all of your speakers.

3. Provide documentation to your speakers on the subject matter they are expected to speak on: Whether you are hosting a panel Q&A session, a lecture, or anything in between,

TIPS (CONTINUED)

have a clear cut format and stick to it. If you will be asking questions, have those created and sent to speakers before your meeting, and try to assign questions to specific folks. By sharing questions in advance, along with a rough estimate on how long answers should be (60-90 seconds is a good range), you can get through more topics and have a session that feels efficient and fast-paced to your audience.

4. Engaging with the audience: Determine if the success of your meeting requires audience input and figure out the best way to engage with your attendees. We recommend sharing clear cut instructions with your attendees throughout the meeting so they know how to best engage with one another, be it through verbally speaking or typing in a chat box.

5. Follow-up with a summary: As mentioned in the first tip, virtual meetings can include more distractions than usual. This means that some people who would like to attend your event may not be able to, or the attendees you do have may miss important information during the call. Strive to make your programming as accessible as possible. Create some kind of toolkit or summary of the event so people can easily share what they learned with others and have a document to refer to long after your event is over.

RESOURCES

- [Example of \(zoom\) speaker prep doc \(see next page\)](#)
- [Examples of Toolkits](#)
- [Examples of Video Resources](#)



VIRTUAL EVENTS ARE HELPING TO BUILD, FOSTER, AND MAINTAIN COMMUNITY. NOW MORE THAN EVER, THEY ARE THE SAFEST AND MOST ACCESSIBLE WAY TO BRING AUDIENCES TOGETHER.
-KAYLA MONTEIRO



ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

1. **Build** out your digital services - even if they are not perfect. Providing resources for youth is imperative during this time.
2. **Review** and apply for various types of funding that have lower restrictions, quicker responses, and allow for innovative and effective work.
3. **Create** programming and actions under the assumption that everyone could potentially be infected with COVID-19 and work according to safety precautions for youth and staff.

SAMPLE ZOOM MEETING GUIDELINES & TIPS

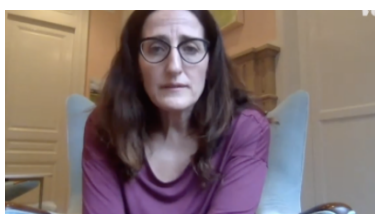
WHERE TO LOOK

- Speakers should look in the middle of the screen and not in the corner when talking. This helps maintain eye contact with viewers of the video as well as with hosts
- For hosts: when asking questions, try to refrain from looking at your phone if there is a prepared question. Ask as earnestly as possible as if you're in a conversation.

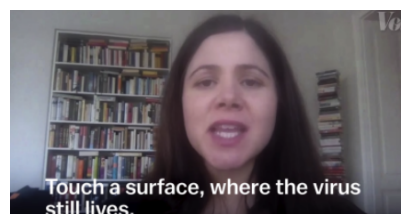
HOW TO FRAME YOUR VIDEO

- Remember, this webinar is being recorded to create a video that will be shared widely. Please try to frame yourself as optimally as possible so we can create a high-quality video to disseminate to the national youth homelessness community.
- Please refrain from using virtual backgrounds or physical backdrops.
- Station your webcam on a fixed surface (e.g. a table or desk). Please avoid stationing your webcam in your bed, your lap, or any other unstable surface. Please avoid using your phone camera unless you have access to a tripod to stabilize your phone.
- Your face and torso should cover $\frac{1}{3}$ of the frame. There should be only a few inches of space in between your head and the drop of the frame. Try to not give yourself a "haircut" by accidentally having your head cropped off at the top of the frame.
- Your background should have enough depth between you and your opposite wall to create a compelling frame for viewers to look at. To keep it simple, position yourself in front of a blank wall if possible.
- Try to find natural light if it is available and avoid backlighting in the image. Please do not position yourself in front of a window.
- In order to ensure a good background, speakers should plan on joining the zoom call 15 minutes before scheduled so hosts and speakers can work out an appropriate frame for the speaker's background.
- Additional tips on lighting and angles can be seen [here](#).

EXAMPLE IMAGES



Source: vox



Source: vox